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Litchfield County Sketches

March 12, 1880

H. J. Fisher

LITCHFIELD COUNTY KETCHES

BY NEWELL MEEKER CALHOUN

**LITCHFIELD COUNTY
UNIVERSITY CLUB**

1906

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Newell Meeker Calhoun

Par Avance

This Volume is one of a series published under the
auspices of the Litchfield County University Club,
and in accordance with a proposition made
to the Club by one of its members, Mr.
Carl Stoeckel, of Norfolk, Connecticut

Howard Williston Carter
Secretary

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Prelude

“Land of my birth, thou art a holy land!
Strong in thy virtue mayest thou ever stand,
As in thy soil and mountains thou art strong!
And as thy mountain echoes now prolong
The cadence of thy waterfalls,—forever
Be the voice lifted up of Time's broad river,
As on it rushes to the eternal sea,
Sounding the praises of thy sons and thee.”

JOHN PIERPONT,

Born at Litchfield South Farms, April 6, 1785

Dedication

To Mr. and Mrs. Carl Stoeckel

**Lovers of Litchfield County
and
Promoters of its Highest Interests**

**This Volume
is
Respectfully Dedicated**

Foreword

LITCHFIELD COUNTY bears the same relation to the rest of the State of Connecticut that the Lake region does to Old England. As about Windermere, Grasmere and Ullswater, in famous Westmoreland, poets, preachers and literary men have made their homes, so more and more there is coming to our mountain county this same delightful class of people. From New Haven, Princeton and New York university presidents and professors have turned their faces northward to these delightful hilltops, and here many of them have built their homes. Doctors, lawyers and editors are finding out that the ozone of these hills is better than drugs, and just as good as foreign travel. Henry Clay Trumbull expressed it as his opinion, after careful thought and study, that Litchfield County had produced more distinguished men than any other county in the United States. Our University Club, born in Norfolk, is one of the most prosperous in the country outside the great cities. The county is also becoming a musical centre through the Litchfield County Choral Union, established and maintained through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Stoeckel, of Norfolk.

Westmoreland County, in England, cannot boast any more lakes than are to be found within our borders, and has no rivers to speak of, while Litchfield County is trav-

Foreword

ersed by the Farmington and the Naugatuck, the Shepaug and the Housatonic. The time is come for us to appreciate better our own State and county. Lovers of the beautiful have only to look about them to find scenery that will match, if not excel, that of the Old World.

If any thought or picture in these sketches shall make the pulses beat a little faster and the color come to the cheeks of any of her sons and daughters, as they say with pride, "This is my native county," our work will not have been in vain. If, better yet, it shall lead some of them back to their birthplace, to beautify the old home, to build a library or a church, to restore the old cemetery in memory of the dear ones gone, and, best of all, to live amongst us, and make the men and women of our county partakers of their lives, enriched by education and travel, then this little book will have accomplished its purpose. To be a lover of our county is well, to be a native is better, but he has attained to a high state of earthly happiness who is lover, native and resident of the best county of the best State in our beloved land.

N. M. C.

Second Congregational Church,

Winsted, Connecticut, March 2, 1906.

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"The scenery and music are changed continuously."

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

I

Grass-grown Roads

THIS particular road was not always grass-grown, for the wheels, the hoofs and the feet passed along too often. But the West called with loud voice, and the city held out riches in the one hand and pleasure in the other, and those who had passed this way often in the old days have hardened their hearts and gone away. So it came to pass that the grass grew luxuriously where wheels once rattled over the stones.

The grass-grown road is not the same for two days in the season. This is a pleasure-house where the scenery and music are changed continuously by unseen hands. It will first show you some hepaticas in the warm hollow by the fence, and blood root and dog violets and adder tongues. Then the strawberries begin to crowd out toward the middle of the road, sending out advance runners, and showing white starlike blossoms, in spite of roadside dirt and dust. The low vine blackberries are only a day or two behind. These climb the lichen-covered wall and drape the unsightly piles of stone which the farmer some time since dumped heedlessly by the roadside. They too have snowy white

Grass-grown Roads

blooms in marked contrast to the juicy blackberry, sweet and toothsome, which is promised. Then come the raspberry blossoms, both red and black, and the high bush blackberries, all contending for their highway rights. They must know that the boy has his eye upon them from the first, and has marked them for his own. It is just possible that they like boys and girls and birds. These last are only paid back for the cleaning off from their stems and leaves of some destructive worms both big and little, and sundry and divers bugs. What the boy is paid for who can tell, for he does nothing for all these wild berry bushes, save to watch them. He has been known, however, to spare their lives when the farmer had passed sentence of death upon them. There must be a tradition of this passed on from mother berry bush to mother berry bush, so that they know that the boy always voted not to cut them down so long as they produced berries.

These white and showy blooms often had mixed in with them the coral colored huckleberry blossoms, which modestly seemed to say, "We do not brag so loud as our neighbors, but just wait and see what we will do." The huckleberry bush is more civilized than the blackberry vines, for it has no savage thorns to scratch the hands of the pickers of the fruit.

The grass-grown road, winding up and down and in and out until stopped by a pair of bars or by a travelled highway, has other promises for the school children who pass that way, their feet, bare and brown, cooled by the green grass. There are the choke-cherry blossoms, snow

Grass-grown Roads

white and so thick as almost to hide the little green leaves. They have pushed themselves back into the fence corners, and even have been known to occupy the soil with the tumbling down stone wall, in their humility and desire not to seem to intrude. The farmer said they were good for nothing, but the birds said they helped out their larder wonderfully, and the boy sought them as keenly as the birds, although the cherries red and yellow puckered his mouth and furred his tongue. They were good to eat and he liked them. These same choke-cherries were highly artistic when in fruit as well as in blossom time. They gave a fine touch of color to the roadside in August, when color was mostly wanting. Indeed, one can readily understand how they helped out the swamp maples and gave them a longer summer, before they put on their gorgeous garments, fair heralds of the death of the leaves.

The elders took their turn at wayside decoration. Snowy white and in great clusters, they looked like white umbrellas, raised to protect the lesser plants from the increasing heat of the sun. The boy observed them, but had no particular use for the blossoms, although his sisters had, for they took them to the old red school house and decorated the teacher's desk with them. Those elders, however, were the boy's good friends, and he was always admiring the straightest of them, and thinking what "popguns" they would make. One was carefully selected, long between its joints, the pith pushed out with a stout hickory rod, paper pulp put in either end, the air compressed with the rod, and lo! a mighty explosion.

Grass-grown Roads

Occasionally one of the wads might hit something or somebody. This was the airgun of a former generation. By putting a plug in the end of the gun in which a small goose quill had been inserted, and winding his rod to make an airtight valve, his popgun became a "squirt gun." This became the terror of the girls and his little brothers.

Elderberries helped to make the wayside attractive later, when in place of the white clusters of bloom there were shown among the shining green leaves jet black bunches of berries. You could have a pie made of them, as you could of the choke-cherries, but neither were quite voted in by the Litchfield County housewife.

The roadway was further made beautiful, as the season wore away, by the sumachs. These were always under sentence of death, since a part of the family were bad, and the many had to bear the sins of a few. There was much ignorance as to which part of the family deserved to be killed, so that the good had to atone for the sins of the bad, as they always have to in this world of men and women and little children. The sumachs began their fall advertising early, by displaying in July their long bunches of bright red berries. These had to come early or they would not have been seen at all, by reason of the flaming red leaves, which were among the first to show the Autumn's pencillings. Hardly anything is more beautiful than a clump of sumachs in early fall, when all other foliage save the swamp maple is still clothed in green. It has crowded out into the roadway

Grass-grown Roads

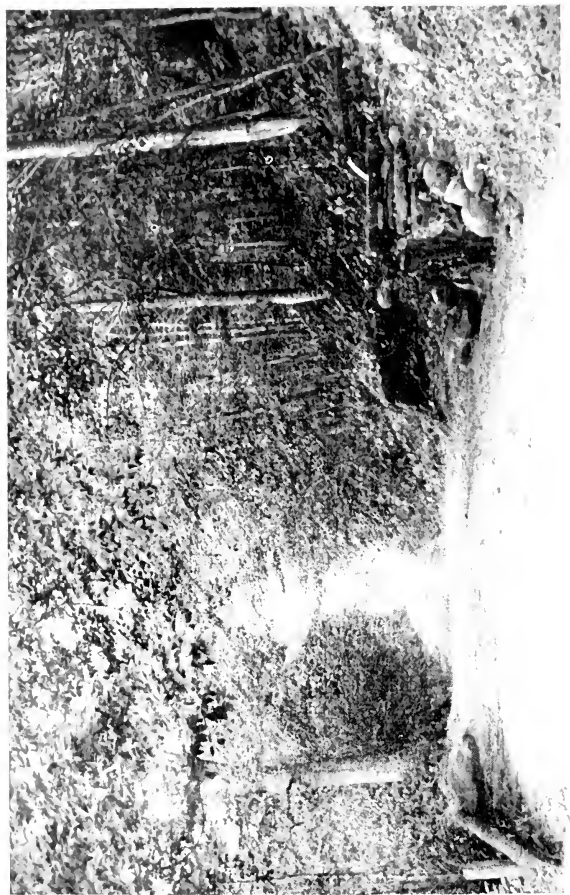
as far as it dare, and stands there in its scarlet cloak, imperial sentinel of the king's highway.

The scene changes rapidly as the September winds begin to blow, and the nights to show frosts in the valleys, the Autumn seed of Winter's snows. The berry bushes are brilliant in their worn-out clothes, which drop from off them one by one in their beauty. The golden rod and asters make believe that there is time enough to enjoy themselves in their gay attire, imitating humans. The bitter-sweet is cracking open its bright berries, gorgeous both without and within, and every living thing, and dying thing, for that matter, puts on bright colors to celebrate the season's close. As if they were saying,

"The leaves are getting scarlet,
The nuts are turning brown,
Lest I should be old-fashioned,
I'll put a trinket on."

Nature does not do as we mortals have a way of doing in the putting on of black for our dead, for she is always hopeful of a resurrection in the Springtime. God has a way of telling his secrets, and some people have a way of stopping their ears. Nature never does this; she always listens to what God has to say, and then takes the comfort of it.

The grass-grown road would be attractive for its color and fruitage alone, but when you stop to listen there is not an hour in all the days of Spring, Summer and Autumn when there is not music. The birds are less dis-



“The birds are less disturbed than on more frequented highways.”

Grass-grown Roads

turbed than on more frequented highways, and sing just to hear themselves praise the One who made and feeds them. They do not sing for people alone, but for His ear, for they sing the sweetest when all the world is asleep. Then it must be for the Heavenly Father's sake, and for the joy of a few early risers, who must always be bird lovers.

The roadside concert has its finer musicians by day and by night. The grass is full of them, some vocalists and some players on instruments peculiarly their own. He who takes their Stradivarius must take them. Their music is graded down to that fineness that can be heard only in the quiet stillness of the deserted roadside. Beyond the power of the human ear there must be oratorios, choruses and solos from all the lesser folk who live on and are happy by the side of the grass-grown road.

These two—the boy and the girl—chased butterflies, picked berries, and went to school along this same country road, and in later years, he from his hilltop and she from the valley, walked as lovers and saw and heard and felt its beauty. But they do not care to live beside it now. Their eyes are blind to its homely beauty, and their ears deaf to its delightful music. The odors of a thousand flowers do not awaken in them slumbering memories of the long ago. The god of this world hath blinded their eyes, appearing to them as pleasure, love of power and love of gain. The deceitfulness of riches and the mad pursuit of the butterflies of fashion absorb their time and thought. It may be they will awaken some Summer day, open their eyes and hearts,

Grass-grown Roads

and come back to see their old friends the birds and the flowers, and the mornings and the evenings which they used to love. It seems strange to us that they and others should prefer the Babel noises of the city to the heavenly stillness of some grass-grown road. Ah, well, if they all wanted to live in the country there would be no grass-grown roads for those of us who love them; then what should we do?



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

II

The Procession of the Seasons

THE procession of the seasons, as seen through youthful eyes, along country lanes and up shaded slopes, was the most interesting thing in all the world. The winding roads and the grassy fields, wooded uplands and corn-waving intervalles are all there as of old, but the seasons come and go unnoticed by the thousand toilers along city streets and in the marts of trade. The boy, long since a man, watches for the coming of the Spring in parks and tiny gardens, and sees only in memory the glorious procession of childhood. Spring with her lap full of flowers led the glad troop of the months, heralded by soft winds and sweet odors. With April first the sap began to stir in the trees, and the blood of the farmer and his boys flowed in sweet rhythm with it. Books were put aside for evening use, and all started for the sap bush, to make maple sugar and syrup. The sap ran in those days as if the tree itself would dissolve, and the buckets were emptied into the great kettle, the fire was kindled, and the boiling away process begun. So all day the blue smoke and the savory steam arose as sweet incense on Springtime's altar. As the twilight



“Such mornings as those were in the sugar camp.”

The Procession of the Seasons

fell, and the moon hung low in the west, like a white ghost of the full moon of last month, the sugaring off began. The maple wax from the kettle was poured on the snow, found under the hemlocks up the glen, for the delectation of the children, and afterward each was given a saucer of the sweet liquid from the kettle to stir until it was cooled, when lo! the most delicious of confections, fresh from the earth and the trees. Huyler cannot match the old-time maple wax and maple sugar, home-made and forest-made, eaten as the firelight under the kettle flared and flickered, lighting up the dark recesses of the woods. Such mornings as those were in the sugar camp, when the first bluebirds were calling, and the robins began timidly to show themselves, and all the old wood sounds were heard again. Stumbling along with a bucket of sap, the sharp eyes of the boy discovered the arbutus half hidden by its green-brown leaves, smiling at him after its long Winter's nap. After a few days of sunshine the hepaticas and wood violets keep company with the arbutus, and together proclaim the coming of the Spring to an invalid sister, shut indoors at the farm house. The squirrels and the woodpeckers and all the dear old forest friends are watched for and welcomed. What an education for the eye and ear was this out of doors life to growing childhood! But this was only an interlude between the acts, for the scene soon changed, indeed was changing every hour. The sun mounted higher each day, and its warmth made the grass green on the southern slopes, tempting one to lie down upon it. The sap had something to do now besides

The Procession of the Seasons

flowing into buckets set to catch it, for it must be about its business. There were thousands of leaves to make, and branches to be strengthened, and little twigs to be made longer, and tassels to hang out, and odors to distil, and seeds to provide with wings. So the buckets were put away, and the plough was burnished in the soil, and the brown sod turned over. As part payment for this kindness it offered its incense as a sweet smelling savor, welcomed always by the man who loves the soil. How beautifully the poet Holmes sings of The Ploughman:

“Clear the brown path to meet his coulter’s gleam.
Lo! on he comes behind his smoking team,
With toil’s bright dewdrops on his sunburnt brow,
The lord of earth, the hero of the plough.
These are the hands whose sturdy labor brings
The peasant’s food, the golden pomp of kings;
This is the page whose letters shall be seen
Changed by the sun to words of living green;
This is the scholar whose immortal pen
Spells the first lesson hunger taught to men;
These are the lines that heaven-commanded toil
Shows on his deed—the charter of the soil.”

That “smoking team” was oftentimes a pair of half-broken steers, led by the family horse, on which the boy rode. This was not an easy job by any means, and not always to his comfort, for a stone at the point of the plough would bring the team up standing, throwing the boy forward on the neck of his steed, or pitching him off into the dirt in a very humbling way. Still he

The Procession of the Seasons

rode a king, and led the van, determining where the rest should follow. Given his choice, however, he would have held the plough, for he had a way of thinking that the boy was always given the hardest work. He would have preferred to build the wall rather than to pick up



“Lo! on he comes behind his smoking team.”

stones, cut the grass rather than ted it, and pitch it upon the cart rather than to rake after.

The Spring hurried on even faster than this “smoking team,” for it had a way of always being a little in advance of the farmer. The seed must be planted, for a bobolink was seen this morning, and the little leaves on the walnut trees are as large as mouses’ ears, both of

The Procession of the Seasons

which were sure indications to the tiller of the soil. The corn was dropped and covered, and in a very few days the boy could follow the rows and drop the small handful of ashes and plaster on the shoots which ambitiously were pricking the soil. After that came the hoeing of corn and potatoes, with a few spare hours at noontime down by the brook, where the speckled trout lay beneath the bank. There was only an alder pole and a coarse line and hook, but the trout were captured all the same. Then those rainy days, too wet to do any farm work, but glorious ones for following the old brook. The grass was wet, the bushes were wet and the boy was very, very wet, but never such sport as that old brook afforded on days when it rained too hard to work out of doors.

Now the days had grown longer and the Fourth of July came round. Very likely the only celebration was that haying was begun on that day. There might be a visit to some celebration or picnic, but if so it was a red-letter Fourth. The hay had to be cut by hand in those days, although there were rumors that a machine had been made that would cut both hay and grain. The Litchfield County farmers, talking over the fence, discussed the possibility of ever using machines on such stony soil. The verdict usually was that before it could be done the stones would all have to be dug from the meadows, which promised a great task for many farmers. The dewy mornings now have a music all their own, the cheery sound of the mower sharpening his scythe, and its soft swish through the grass. The larks begin to be

The Procession of the Seasons

alarmed, for the farmer is not depending on his neighbors, but is early in the field with his boys. As the sun mounts the heavens they rest under the old apple tree, and eat their lunch of hot gingerbread, with sweet milk from the cellar for a drink—food and drink equal to the nectar and ambrosia of the gods. As they rest they look complacently at the long swaths adown the field, and enjoy to the full the smell of the new-mown hay. But the locust saws out his sharp-set music from a neighboring tree, warning them that it will be hot by and bye, and so they spring to their work again. Then comes the rest at noontime, then the raking into windrows, and the carting to the capacious barn, and the stowing away in the great mows, while the grasshoppers and crickets sing their cheery songs of encouragement and approval. Then the shadows fall upon the field of the day's labors, with its long crinkled ways, and then

“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.”

The procession moves on, and the awkward cradle lays the ripe grain prone upon the ground, and the cool nights and mornings, together with the music of the katydid in the maples, warn the farmer that the corn must be shocked, the potatoes dug and the corn husked, that everything may be made snug for winter. About this time look out for Thanksgiving. It was never celebrated and never can be in its real old-time glory



“Then the shadows fall upon the field of the day’s labors.”

The Procession of the Seasons

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outside of New England, where it originated. The farmhouse and the country are peculiarly adapted to help in its celebration. It furnishes such turkeys and chickens, such nuts and apples, and above all such a crisp, bright Thanksgiving air. There are no ovens like those old brick ones, heated with the black alder wood, which was fed into the capacious mouth unstintedly. When your mind turns fondly to pies, where in the world can you find such "pie timber" as on a Litchfield County farm? There they were on the long shelves in the pantry, where the pans of milk had stood in the summer, an inviting and imposing array, actually looking too good to eat on ordinary occasions. They were of every variety and description; savory mince, highly colored huckleberry, marvellous tarts with legendary inscriptions wrought in their crusts, apple pies without crust and with crusts turned over, and last, but not least, golden pumpkin pies. But what were pies and other good things without an appetite, and where in all the world could an appetite be gotten for the Thanksgiving dinner better than on the farm? The air was crisp and frosty, the sermon long and dull, unless the parson had some special reason for giving it to the Hittites and the Perizzites; the ride was invigorating from church, or, better yet, the walk, all combining to make the dinner a never to be forgotten one. Then came the long evening, all gathered around the fire, with stories and blind-man's-buff, and more pie and walnuts, and the making of molasses candy and popping corn! Oh, those happy faces dear to memory! But the long table grew

The Procession of the Seasons

shorter with each recurring Thanksgiving Day; the circle narrowed around the old hearthstone; crowns of silver graced the heads of father and mother, and chairs were empty that once were filled with beloved forms. Then there came round the day for the home-going, and there was no home. The ashes were cold upon the hearth; the old clock no longer ticked out its glad welcome from its corner; the blinds were closed, the old paths grass-grown, and the prayer, the song and the laughter resound in memory's chambers only.

“How strange it seems, with so much gone
Of Life and Love, to still live on!”

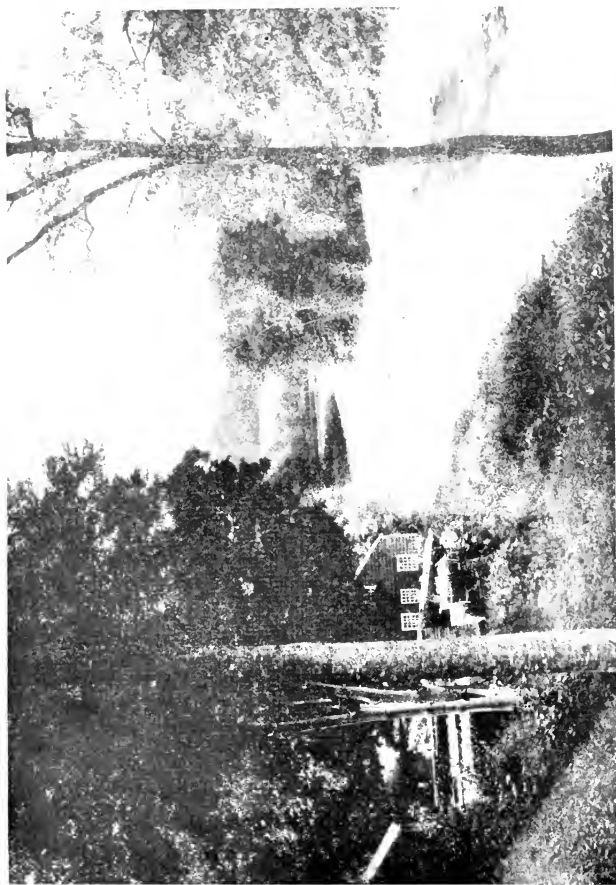


LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

III

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

EVEN those who are well acquainted with the region of which we are writing do not ordinarily associate the Farmington River with Litchfield County. Its wild beauty, however, is very largely on its upper reaches, and within our borders. The gorge below New Hartford, known as Satan's Kingdom, with the railroad tracks cut into the solid walls on either side, and the river rushing and swirling over its rocky bed, is a bit of Colorado in miniature. Above the same town the river widens out, because of the extensive mill dam, and is bordered by low-lying meadows, with fringes of trees and a background of wavy hills. These meadows are dotted with elms, whose wide-reaching, drooping branches shelter herds of cattle taking their noontime rest. At Pleasant Valley, three miles farther up, the hills have grown steeper, the river more noisy, and the scenery more rugged. From thence to River-ton is a most delightful drive, with pleasant surprises at every turn of the road. Sometimes you come out into the open, and have a magnificent view of hemlock sprinkled hills, which in Autumn show off the oaks, birches and hard maples to wonderful advantage. Again the carriage passes noiselessly over a thick bed of pine needles, while the pines overhead sing the old-



“Now you look upon an ancient mill, almost hidden by the trees.”

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

time dirges which they sang to Indian mourners in the long ago. Now you look upon an ancient mill, almost hidden by the trees, and again up a mountainside, down which a noisy brook is leaping. Another turn of the river and the road, and you look up the broad stream for a half mile or more, as the water tumbles over huge boulders or makes frothy eddies under their dark shadows, with nothing to do the livelong day but to enjoy itself. Here the birds come to drink, and pay for their refreshment with a song. Down through the dark woods a herd of deer have often been seen, pausing on the bank of the river to listen for any sounds betokening danger. These beautiful animals are multiplying rapidly in the county, and, being protected from the hunters, are becoming more and more accustomed to the sight of men. They are often seen in the pastures feeding with the cows, as quietly as if they were a part of the herd. Driving or walking along the unfrequented roads has, besides the interest of the landscape, the expectation of seeing not only deer crossing the way, but also many other wild animals and birds rarely seen on travelled highways. Gray squirrels, rabbits, woodchucks, foxes, partridges, pheasants, all take a look at you, and if your eyes are sharp and your feet light you may have a good look at them.

At Riverton they used to make the river work, fashioning scythes for the farmers and making paper with which to wrap up the sales of country and city stores; but the old mills are most of them silent now, the moss growing over their unused wheels. These scythes were in

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

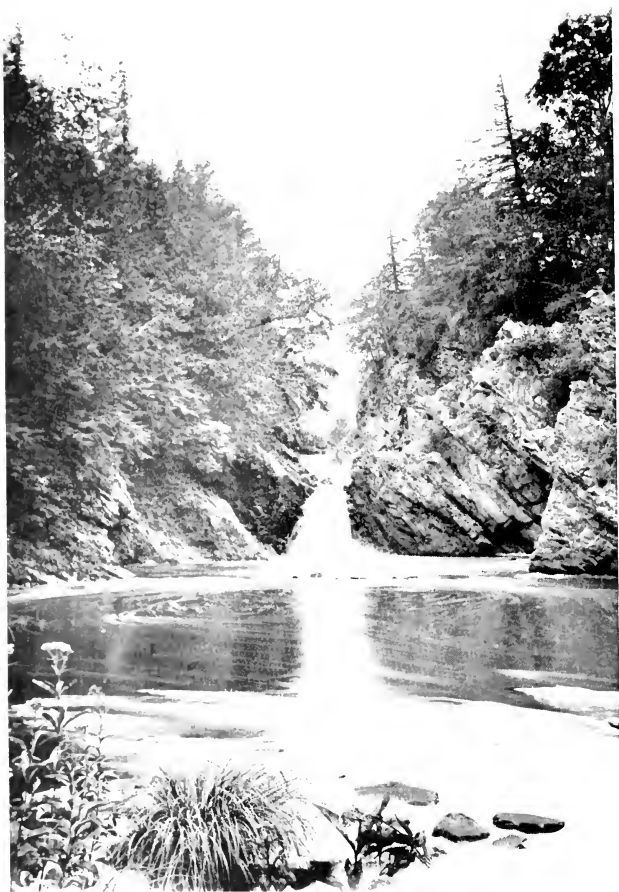
great demand in the old days, before mowing machines were invented. Here at Riverton lived for many years a man who sold the produce of one of the mills, and afterward became the honored Governor of the State. Deserted stores and closed houses and churches with small congregations tell of the inability of such remote places to compete with manufacturing centres along the line of the railroads. The hum of machinery has given place to the more musical splash of water over the dam, as it idles away the long Summer days. Sandy Brook flows into the Farmington here. Its name is prosaic, but not so the stream itself. Rising in Massachusetts, it appears in our county as a sizable trout stream, and one of the best if times and seasons are observed. Through the woods of North Colebrook and Colebrook it takes its course, through lovely wooded valleys, alongside of the country roads, under picturesque bridges that tremble with the weight of horses and carriage. In the early Spring it is a raging torrent, while in the late Summer it is a quiet, sedate stream, on its good behavior. He who has spent a day in the month of May fishing along its banks has indeed drunk of the very elixir of life. A flush of green was on the birches, and the fragrance of the flowers and all growing things in the air. The birds just back from the Southland were trying all their new songs, and fairly beside themselves with joy to be again in Northern woods. There were love ditties in the air, and love making in the trees, with the warm sunshine filtering through the branches, making the trout lively and

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

playful. Sandy Brook can be followed long distances without sight of human habitation. What a delightful place to forget the rushing, maddening course of things in the busy world, and have blessed communion with Nature, that dear mother of us all!

From Riverton to New Boston, along the Farmington, there are revealed to Nature lovers new beauties at every turn, showing the infinite possibilities of a stream born among the hills. As you go farther north toward the Berkshires, the landscape is more broken, with hills that are nearly high enough and rocky enough to be called mountains. The road takes you at times under great forest trees, but the wandering sawmills are rapidly making the beautiful woods into lumber. Shaded drives in Litchfield County are likely to exist in memory only unless something can be done for the preservation of the forests. It is no uncommon thing for farms to be sold for what the lumber is worth, and then when the last stick of wood that is of any value has been cut the farm is abandoned.

Returning to Riverton, one should follow up Mad River, through Robertsville to Tunxis Falls, and through the gorge where the electricity for Winsted is generated. There is a drop here in the river of perhaps one hundred feet within a half mile. When the river is full banked it is a beautiful sight to see it rush over the rocks, and noisily and at a breakneck pace seek the river below. Commercialism never makes Nature more interesting, but takes away her lovely charm in part. Her beauty is always accentuated by solitude.

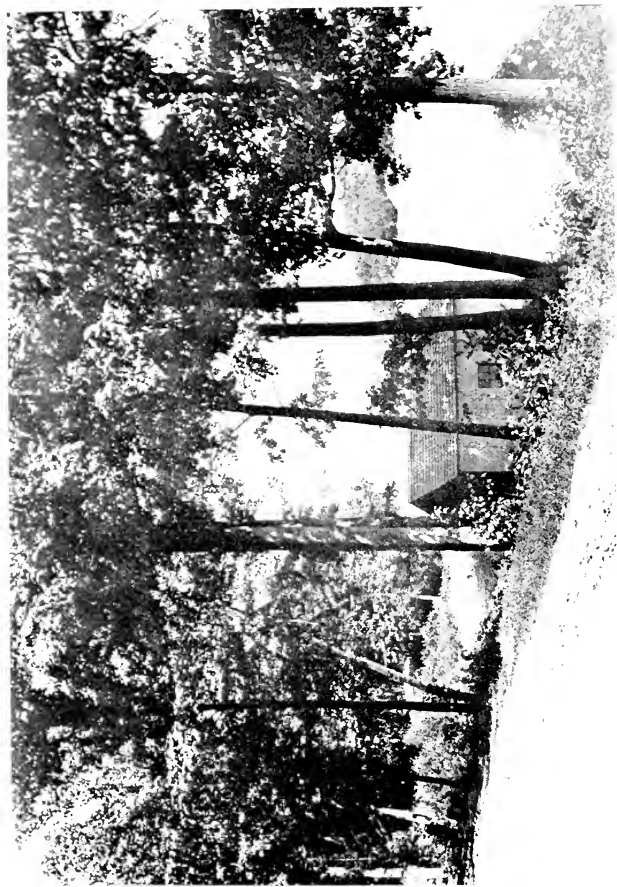


"It is a beautiful sight to see it rush over the rocks."

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

He who discovers the work of Nature unaided by man, just as it has come from the hand of the Creator, has seen beauty indeed. Explorers and pathfinders have been wonderfully favored. The track of human beings, the mark of axe or pick, wheel or hoof, that tells of the near presence of man, takes away something of the charm which Nature in her solitude must always possess.

Mad River is the clew which, if followed, will take you to the busiest place in all the Farmington Valley, if not the most beautiful. Winsted outrivals ancient Rome in one respect, for, while Rome was built on seven hills, Winsted can boast of well-nigh seventeen. It is decidedly a Swiss town, clinging to hillsides which rise in every direction. Few of the streets are straight, unless one should say that some of them are straight up and down. The town is better adapted for coasting than for automobiling. As in ancient Rome, so in Winsted you may hear the plash of water everywhere. The most excellent water power—the pride of the borough—makes possible its supply for drinking purposes and its well equipped factories, wherein almost everything is manufactured. The water is stored far up in the mountains in an artificially constructed reservoir, and in Crystal and Highland Lakes, which receive the overflow through a tunnel in the mountains, the gift of an enterprising citizen. From Highland Lake the water falls near a hundred feet to the level of the river, furnishing water power all the way down. The course of Mad River determined the windings of



“Surrounded by woods and hills.”

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

Main Street, which curves about in nearly the shape of a horseshoe. Mills have sprung up along its entire course. In one of these factories pins enough are made in a single week to supply every man, woman and child in the United States with one. Others produce underclothing to keep people warm, jackknives to do their whittling, tools to build their houses, lamps to give them light, chairs for them to sit in, household hardware to make their homes beautiful, knives and forks to eat with, leather to bind their books and help to make organ music by furnishing material for the bellows, clocks to keep accurate time for them, and when time is no more for them shrouds and coffin trimmings are produced for their burial. While all this work is being done, the water dashing merrily over flumes and dams makes blithe music day and night.

Benevolent citizens have by gifts and bequests for their native town made it possible to build churches, the Gilbert High School, with its magnificent endowment of more than a half million dollars; the Gilbert Home for Orphaned Children, with an endowment as large, or larger—a model institution of its kind; a hospital with the finest location in the State; two soldiers' monuments, and numerous other improvements, of which the town is justly proud. From the Soldiers' Monument on a hill in the heart of the town a fine bronze soldier looks down by day and night, and when the darkness comes on the monument is lighted by electricity, indicating that the patriotism of a community is a light illuminating the darkest night. Three

The Upper Reaches of the Farmington

church edifices of granite, beautiful without and within, testify to the faith and works of the people, and that they believe that the church is in the world to stay. Two public libraries, one at either end of the town, furnish ample facilities for reading and study. The healthfulness of Winsted is borne witness to by the fact that in the Second Congregational Church there are living at this writing five people who have passed their ninetieth birthday—one of them his ninety-eighth—whose combined ages are four hundred and sixty-nine years. The drives about Winsted are unsurpassed and of wonderful variety. Go in any direction and you can make no mistake, whether it is about Highland Lake, over the Winchester and Goshen hills to New Boston, or through sleepy Colebrook village, or to Norfolk, with its beautiful residences and its commanding views. Pure air, kaleidoscopic scenery and well cared for roads make out of doors life a joy and delight.

Highland Lake, to which reference has been made, lies just above the borough of Winsted, is three miles long, and has a charming driveway clear about it. It is essentially an Adirondack lake, surrounded by woods and hills, with cottages scattered along its shores. Sitting on the broad veranda of one of these, with the moonlight reflected in the water, those words of Byron, written of Lake Lemman, might apply:

“Clear placid Highland! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.”



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

IV

Two Country Parsons

A VOLUME could easily be written on the Litchfield County ministers, and if the work was as interesting as the men are it would be exceedingly readable. These two men, whom I have called country parsons, lived and wrought in the little town of Bethlehem, eight miles south of Litchfield. Bethlehem had then within its borders but one church, and never ought to have had but one where there are now three. The population of the town was, by the last census, only 576, and has been decreasing for a number of decades. Why New England people should economize on everything else and be wasteful in religious matters must forever remain a mystery, unless we say that it is because of their love of liberty to worship God in the way they choose. There ought to be a Protestant Pope whose business should be to consolidate churches in the small towns and villages. This would be for the glory of God and the good of men.

Those who named this hill town Bethlehem probably had the Bethlehem of Judea in mind, since the region adjacent, now Washington and Roxbury, was once called Judea. The landscape is restful in the



“Where stood the original meeting house.”

Two Country Parsons

extreme, and the Woodbury hills to the south roll away much as the hills do about ancient Bethlehem. Five streets converge at a triangular green, where stood the original meeting house with its "sabba day houses." In these last the congregation on a Winter's day thawed itself out in front of the open fire and drank its flip. This church called, in the year 1740, a young man then twenty-one years old, named Joseph Bellamy. Young Bellamy had been preaching for them about two years, having been graduated from Yale College at the age of sixteen, in the class of 1735. His salary was fixed at ninety pounds and fifty cords of wood a year. Besides this he cultivated quite a large farm, which was a part of the church holdings. To assist him in the care of this he had a negro servant who was undoubtedly a slave, as slavery still existed in Connecticut at the time. Some of Mr. Bellamy's parishioners complained that their minister used words which the people could not understand, and suggested a simpler vocabulary. "Why," said their learned pastor, "everybody can understand me." To prove it he called in his negro servant and said, "Pompey, could you draw an inference?" Now, "inference" was one of the learned words to which they objected. The colored man stood respectfully with cap in hand and, rubbing his woolly head, replied, "Massa Bellamy, the old mare draw it if de tugs hold." It was this same old negro who was asked which was the greater preacher, Dr. Bellamy or Dr. Backus. His answer was, "Dey both great preachers, but Massa Bellamy he make God greater."

Two Country Parsons

Immediately after the coming of Bellamy to Bethlehem was the Great Awakening, as it was called, followed by the visit of Whitefield to New England. This young minister, hardly old enough to grow a beard, threw himself into the work with flaming zeal, for he was a man of fervid piety. Not only did he lead in the evangelistic work in his own parish, but in two years he preached four hundred and fifty-eight times in two hundred and thirteen different places in New England. He was a pupil and friend of Jonathan Edwards, and was a man of majestic presence, expressive voice, vivid imagination and dramatic style. Having also a well-trained mind, logical and persuasive, he soon became famous as a preacher and an able writer on theological subjects. He was ranked by some with Whitefield himself in his power over an educated audience. A triumvirate of great preachers was often named in the same breath—Edwards, Hopkins and Bellamy. Bethlehem soon became the home of the first theological school in New England, taught in the home of Bellamy. Young men came from far and near to sit at his feet, and these afterward became the leaders of theological thought in their generation. Bellamy had a clear insight of religious truth, and was a forceful teacher in both the pulpit and the classroom. Some of his terse sayings are still told in Bethlehem, having been handed down with the traditions of the place. A student read a sermon which was quite voluminous, whereupon Dr. Bellamy asked him if he expected to prepare any more sermons. The young man in aston-

Two Country Parsons

ishment informed him that he did, and ventured to inquire why such a question should be asked. "Oh," said the doctor, "I was only wondering what you were going to put into them." At another time a number of his students were about to leave him, and had gotten into the stage coach at the door, when the doctor came rushing out, telling them that he had forgotten something very important. They returned, and when they were seated, expectant of some important deliverance on the work upon which they were about to enter, he said, "Young gentlemen, when it rains, let it rain. You are excused." Well were it for all young ministers, and old ones, too, if they would remember those words.

The sermons of Dr. Bellamy give one little idea of this side of the man. They rather hide his individuality and keep out of sight some of the marked peculiarities that characterized him as a preacher and teacher. Here, as always, it was the man behind the sermon that made it effective.

In the days when doctors of divinity were very rare even in our large cities, and almost unknown in country places, Aberdeen College, in Scotland, conferred upon this Bethlehem pastor the degree of D. D., because of the great learning shown in his theological writings. This shows not only the estimate put upon the man by the religious thinkers of the times, but how widely read were the writings of this minister of an obscure town in Litchfield County, Connecticut. About this time, or soon after, the only Presbyterian church in New York City gave Dr. Bellamy a call to become

Two Country Parsons

its pastor, and, having failed the first time, afterward repeated the call. But it was unable to draw him away from his country pulpit, his students, his farm and his study, where he was engaged in his great thoughts. His fame as a preacher brought people from far and near to hear him, and many students to sit at his feet. Take it all in all, it is safe to say that Dr. Bellamy was the greatest preacher the county has ever had settled within its boundaries.

There came one day to this school of the prophets at Bethlehem a young man of brilliant intellect and fine presence. He was no less a personage than Aaron Burr, the son of President Aaron Burr of Princeton College, himself a warm friend of Dr. Bellamy. He could hardly have come to study for the ministry, but was undoubtedly sent by his father with the hope that the young man might be led by the famous teacher to see and accept the claims of the Christian faith. It has been hinted that such were the audacity and self-confidence of Aaron Burr that he thought to show Dr. Bellamy that his faith was groundless. The result was that the pupil did not change the faith of the preacher nor the preacher win his pupil to accept the claims of Christianity. If this last had been accomplished, how different had been the future of this brilliant young man, saving his name from infamy and his country from this blot on the fair pages of her history!

Dr. Joseph Bellamy served the church in Bethlehem for fifty years, resisting all the persuasions of those

Two Country Parsons

who would have his light shine in more conspicuous places. A hilltop country town was high enough for him. Dr. Bellamy and the Rev. John Langdon, third in the pastorate of this church, are the only ministers buried in the cemetery at Bethlehem. All others have chosen to listen to the invitations to larger fields of service, or have been dismissed by the church, desirous of a new voice in the pulpit.

The other country parson, who came on the death of Dr. Bellamy, in 1790, was Azel Backus, Yale, 1787. This was his only pastorate, since he began his preaching here, and was called from Bethlehem to become the first president of Hamilton College, Clinton, New York, in 1812. Dr. Backus was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Princeton in 1810. How great an honor this was is seen by the fact that before 1818 Yale College had conferred this degree on not more than two or three individuals. This parson was a brilliant classical scholar, and to help in the support of his large and growing family, and assist young men into the Christian ministry, he established a classical school in his own house. When Dr. Backus left the town and church, the school passed into the hands of the Rev. John Langdon, who kept it until his death, in 1830. Mr. Langdon was also a rare scholar and a successful teacher. To him was sent Henry Ward Beecher, from Litchfield, at the age of twelve years. Bethlehem was thus an educational centre of considerable note for nearly one hundred years.



“The only ministers buried in the cemetery at Bethlehem.”

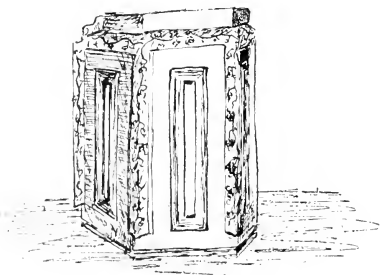
Two Country Parsons

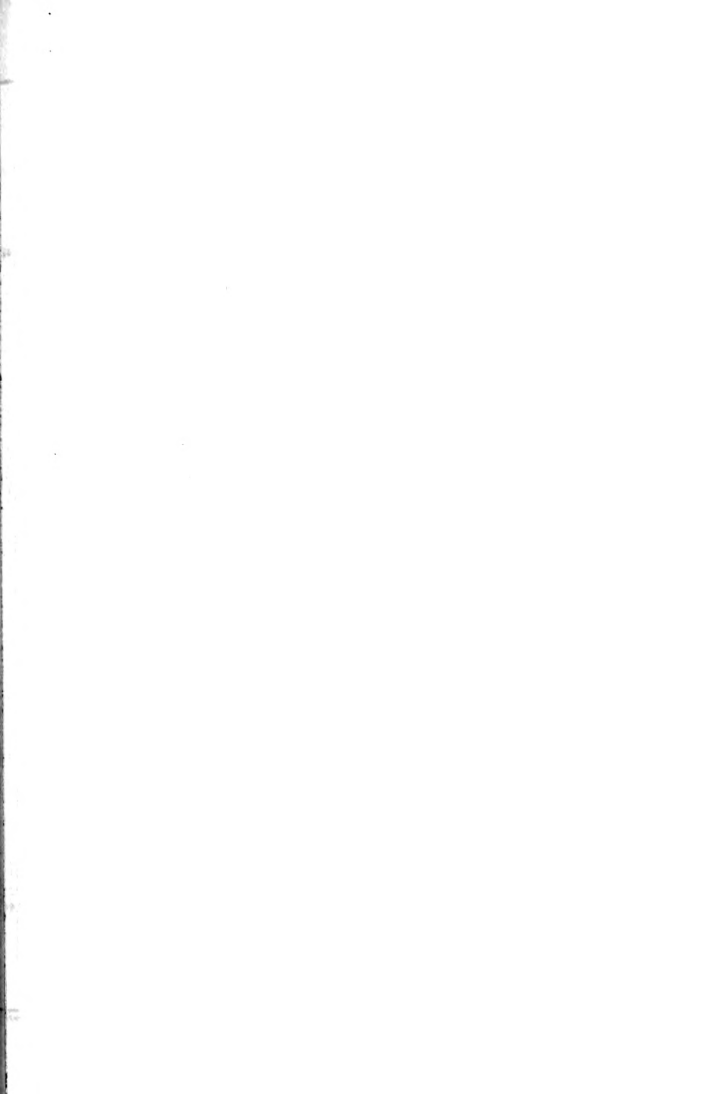
Dr. Backus was a different type of man from his predecessor. He was not so great a preacher, nor so eminent a theologian. He was pre-eminently a scholar, although no mean preacher. As a teacher he inspired his pupils with the loftiest ideals, and turned many into the ministry. Dr. Backus was a wit, dry and caustic, and these witticisms still live in Bethlehem, where the writer has often heard them repeated. A farmer brought a load of hay to the parsonage barn, the cart drawn by four pairs of oxen, the leaders being a pair of yearlings. Dr. Backus looked them over and asked why those little fellows were put on. "To draw," said the farmer. The reply came quick and sharp: "Draw? Why, they could not draw 'Watts' Hymns for Infant Minds' down hill." When asked afterward if he said any such thing, he replied, "Very likely; it sounds just like me." When told that that part of the town known as Carmel Hill, which was notoriously bad, had been up to some new deviltry, the doctor remarked, "They had best fence off that neighborhood and have a little hell of their own." Dr. Backus began his work at Hamilton in a vigorous and hopeful way, but after a service of only four years was gathered to his fathers at the age of fifty-two. It is admitted, however, that he left his impress on the college, and greatly helped to make it the power for good which it has been for nearly a century.

What privileges the people of this little hill town of Bethlehem had in those days, in the hearing of these brilliant and learned men, and in having these princely schol-

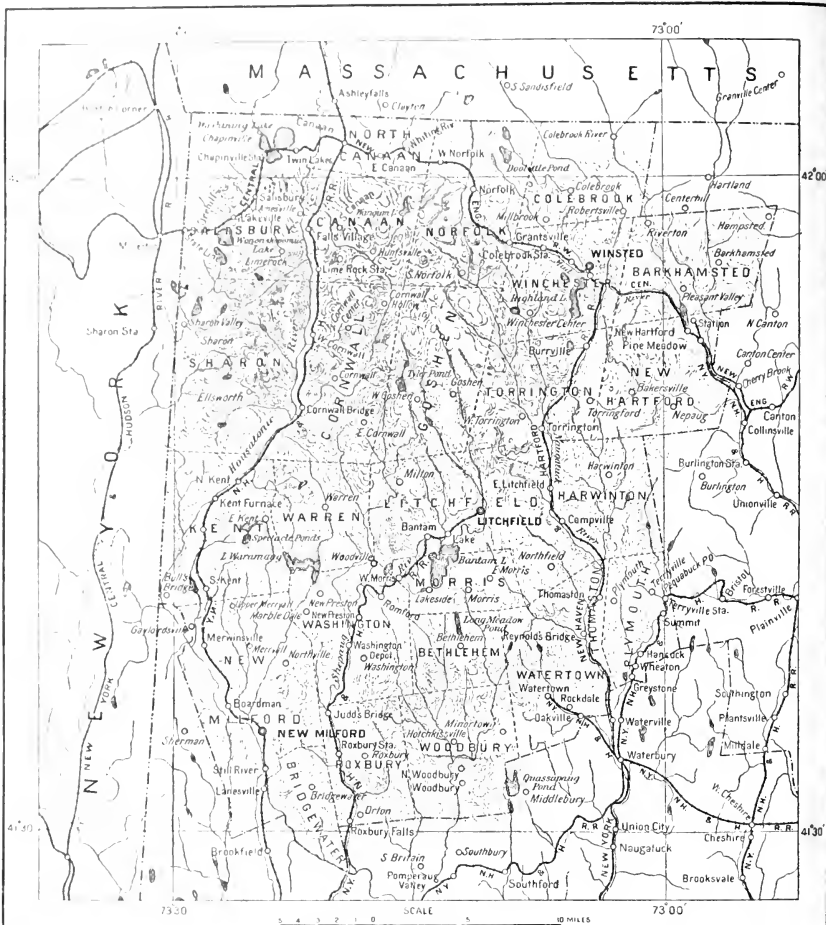
Two Country Parsons

ars and world-famous preachers live among them! One can but wonder if they appreciated them, or often found them dry and uninteresting. They are all gone, pastors and people. The old meeting house in which their voices rang out these sublime Gospel truths is also gone, and a new one which is now old has taken its place. The pulpit in which they preached remains, and the chair with its wide arm in which Dr. Bellamy sat and wrote out his great sermons on "Divine Sovereignty" and "The Freedom of the Will." Do pulpits of pine and oak last longer than people, with their strength of intellect, aspirations after the unattainable and dreams of immortality! How pertinent the words of the Master, "God is not a God of the dead, but the living." So we may believe that these two country parsons still live and enjoy their good parishioners, whom they led in green pastures and beside the still waters.





MAP OF LITCHFIELD CO. CONN.



Copy after 1875 scale 1:50,000

County Seats indicated thus
 Towns and Stations on Railroads indicated thus
 Towns and Villages not on Railroads indicated thus

LITCHFIELD
 Roxbury Sta
 Roxbury

Drawn by Miss Mary J. C. New York

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

V

The Finest Drive in the World

WHERE shall one find it, and who shall be the judge? If it seemed the finest in youth, would it continue to be so later in life? Then, too, do not conditions change with the changing years? The estimate which one puts upon such a thing as a drive must necessarily depend partly upon ever-varying conditions. No one thinks the road a pleasant one over which he is driving to see a sick friend. The soul's moods, as well as those of the sky and landscape, help to make or mar the ways by which we go.

The title of this article, "The Finest Drive in the World," is a borrowed one, and has oftenest been applied to that most wonderfully picturesque road along the shores of the Bay of Naples from Sorrento to Castel-a-Mare. There you have well-nigh perfect conditions. The roadbed is hard and smooth, the perfection of engineering skill, winding through Italian villas and under beetling crags, with orange groves and flower gardens on every hand. Below lies sparkling the blue-green water of the Bay of Naples, with Capri, Baïæ and Posilipo in the hazy distance. Before you



"Your way shall lead you between laurel-crowned hillsides."

The Finest Drive in the World

rises Vesuvius, with its turbaned summit, white by day and glowing at night—a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Over all is the blue sky of sunny Italy. That is a drive which, if once taken, will surely never be forgotten. It will atone for some of the ugliness and dirt which are to be found in Naples itself. As a stranger in a strange land, there are, however, no associations connected with it, and so an essential element is wanting. To get the very most out of it, one must have loved every hill, mountain and stream from boyhood; he must have seen, as he has often driven over it, sunsets and sunrises, mountains and bay, Winter frosts and Summer harvests; he must have had a heart as full as a bobolink's, and a friend by his side whose presence irradiated and glorified all things. Only one's native land can furnish for him "the finest drive in the world." Possibly we may find it in Litchfield County.

One might start from Winsted, in the northeast part of the county, and follow up the valley of Mad River for four or five miles, along a shady, winding driveway beside the noisy, businesslike stream which all the way seems babbling boastfully of what it will do when it gets to town. Farther along the way shall lead one between laurel-crowned hillsides, for the drive should be taken in June, most lovely of months. Whatever may be the national flower, that of Litchfield County is the mountain laurel. The Litchfield County University Club has appropriately put it upon its seal, and its stately blossoms adorn the club's June banquet at "Whitehouse," in Norfolk. The pink and white

The Finest Drive in the World

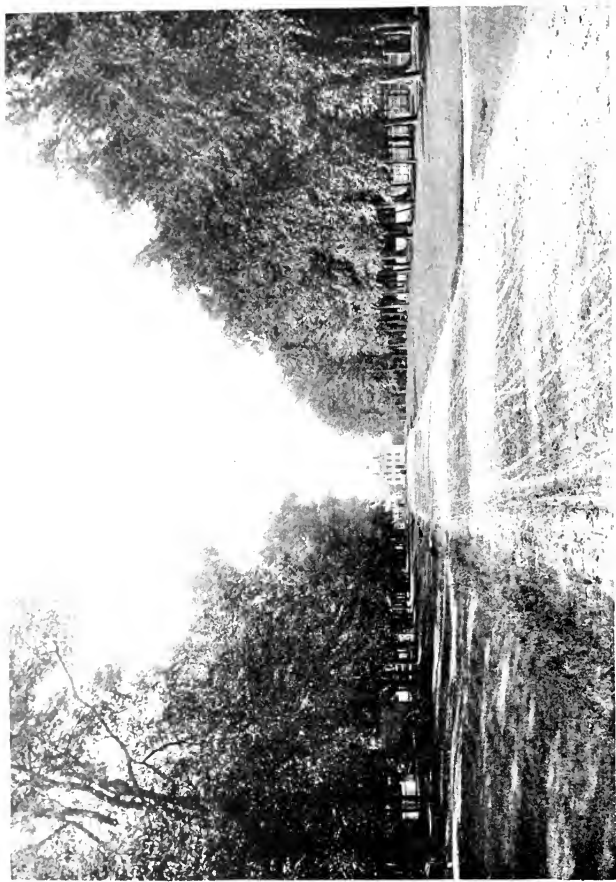
blossoms appear everywhere, hiding in the woods and straying over the pastures. Here a large clump stands out in the open, backed by pines or hemlock. Yonder the side of the hill is covered with them, standing in groups and singles, as if they had been carefully planted by a landscape gardener. At a turn in the road an opening is discovered in the woods, where there are acres of laurel, looking like an orchard in full bloom, with the added beauty which the waxy green leaves give the gay flowers. This common roadway—if a country road could be called common—has become a royal driveway, through the king's gardens, and the edges of the silver lakes, reflecting their beauty, give to them a double existence like our own—the material and the spiritual. It is permitted us to think that the flowers that adorn the earth are like all things here—shadows of the heavenly. Earth's hard conditions cramp and blight them, but in the heavenly world we shall see them in their ideal state and condition. The discoveries and improvements which men are making in flowers and fruits are the way we have of finding out how to do things after God's patterns, that is all. We do not make things; we only discover them.

We have well-nigh lost our road, while following one of the soul's pathways, and must get back again to good hard dirt and gravel, packed down by hoofs and wheels. Had we the time to climb this fence, cross over yonder brook, which is saying, "There are trout here," and explore that thick swamp just in the edge of the woods, we should find another flower rarely found in our State.

The Finest Drive in the World

It is the *Rhododendron maximum*, or great laurel. The kind-hearted farmer who lives near that swamp used to bring its snow-white blossoms to the little daughter, along with the weekly supply of eggs, and called them "rosydendrons." It secludes itself in remote swamps, and its whereabouts is known to only a few of its lovers. It is of interest to note that both of these New England wild flowers have been transplanted in Old England, to adorn some of the estates of the nobility.

Getting back to our carriage we steadily ascend until we come to Norfolk, thirteen hundred feet above the sea level, and as much as thirteen thousand "celestial diameters" above the level of the dirty cities. Norfolk has the highest railway station in the State, and by far the most beautiful. Without it is granite, and within decorated with pictures which would adorn a drawing room. With a library of perfect appointments, an artistic and commodious gymnasium, golf links and tennis courts, and withal a cultivated and refined people, Norfolk has justly become the centre of a most charming Summer colony. Once each year the college men of the county are the guests of the founders of the Litchfield University Club, at their beautiful home, where they are entertained with lavish hospitality. Will not such perfect conditions as the Norfolk people enjoy make heaven less to be longed for? A traveller, it is said, once asked for a ticket to Heaven, and was given one to Norfolk, to his entire satisfaction. One can easily believe this to be true.



“ Now we are in classic Litchfield.”

The Finest Drive in the World

Our way now leads to the south, along woodsy roads and over sharp hills, through North Goshen, past Ivy Mountain Tower, along the East Street through creamy Goshen, where, from the very backbone of the county, the Catskills are to be seen toward the sunset, and the Talcott Mountains toward the sunrising. Now we are in classic Litchfield, where the first law school in the United States flourished under Judges Reeves and Gould, and where Henry Ward Beecher first saw the light. The streets are overarched with stately elms and maples, and bordered with old-fashioned houses and new-fashioned residences. Flower gardens and lawns, hotels and public buildings, all proclaim that we are in a much-loved town. Driving down the main street to the south, we catch the first sight of Bantam Lake, lying in the midst of cultivated farms. The highway from Litchfield to Morris is for the most part in sight of this beautiful sheet of water. At Morris you will pass the site of the old Morris Academy, the first school of its kind in this part of the country, where many young men were educated who afterward filled positions of responsibility in the great world. Here, too, the eye can sweep a wide horizon on every side, for these are the hill towns of Connecticut. Southward still your road leads you, always high up on the ridge, with green wavy hills stretching away on either hand, and rich farm lands with white farm houses and capacious barns. Three miles south of Morris is Bethlehem, once the home of Backus and Bellamy, two country parsons of wide fame, and of the classical school founded by the one, and the

The Finest Drive in the World

theological school held under the roof of the other. This village street, like most of those in Litchfield County, is long, wide and shady. The roads leading from Bethlehem to Woodbury are all of them a revelation of beauty. Whichever one you take, you will be persuaded is the finest. Nonawang Falls, on the valley road, have more than a local reputation and make a most delightful place for the noontime luncheon. Woodbury is well in the southern part of the county, and reminds one of Stratford-on-Avon, so quiet and dreamy is its beauty. Oremaug Park, just above the village, and the Pomperaug Valley, with lush meadows and waving green fields, tempt the traveller to linger and spend the Summer days in this vale of contentment. Turning now to the northward, our road winds up the valley through Hotchkissville and Wickipeema, and over the hills to Washington Green. In the early days this region was called Judea, and well named it was, "for as the mountains are round about Jerusalem," so they are round about Washington. This hill town was made famous years ago by Mr. Frederick Gunn and his school, which was called "The Gunnery." It was immortalized by J. G. Holland as the "Bird's Nest." Mr. Gunn was a wonderful school teacher, and sent out into the world many distinguished pupils. One of them—the lamented and brilliant Hamilton Gibson—afterward returned and made his home in Washington. United States Senator Platt, a native of this same hill town, loved it so well that he came back here for his vacations, and was gathered to his fathers amidst the scenes he had loved in his boyhood.

The Finest Drive in the World

Homelike, modern houses blend with the old-fashioned Colonial ones, with their white paint and green blinds, just as Summer visitors and old-time residents here mix cordially together, forming an ideally delightful community.

From Washington to New Preston any road you choose to take will prove itself the most beautiful, whether by the valley up Bee Brook, or through Calhoun Street over the hills. Taking this latter way, the backward look will repay you, for there are glories behind as well as about you.

New Preston is twins, one living on the hill, the other on the stream which flows down from Waramaug. Horace Bushnell and President Day, of Yale College, were born in New Preston. There was an old academy here, which was presided over by Gould Whittlesey, and from its doors many youth went to college. He it was who used to say, when tired of trying to make some dull pupil understand, "If I had my life to live over again, I would not be a pedagogue." His scholars loved him, however, and when his teaching work was done they came back from all over the country to an anniversary, to testify of the love which they had for the old master. Mr. Whittlesey inspired his pupils with a desire for knowledge. Another schoolmaster has labored here for long years, and in his home-school has shaped the lives of multitudes of boys. Mr. Henry Upson has served the church as preacher, his country as chaplain during the war, and the cause of education in the laying of the foundations of character and learning in his



“ Along the shores of Lake Waramaug.”

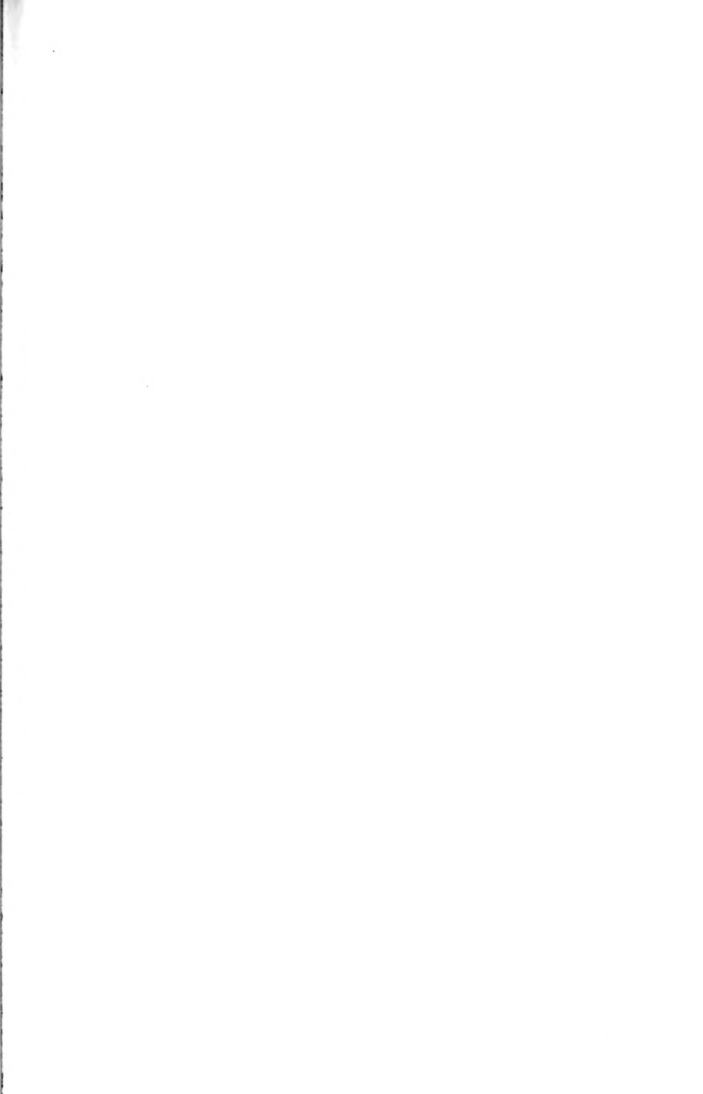
The Finest Drive in the World

pupils. Not many men have wrought in church, State and college better than he has. Northward again our way leads us, along the shores of Lake Waramaug, with its beautiful Summer homes and background of hills and mountains, over these last into Kent, up the Housatonic River to the Cornwalls, over more mountains to Sharon the restful, remote from the noise of railway and trolley. Those who first came hither to make their homes must have had in mind that other Vale of Sharon, stretching along under the mountains of Judea. Undulating, cultivated hills roll away toward the horizon, while quiet lakes sleep in their soft embrace. From Sharon to Lakeville the roadway is the best, through a rich farming region and a landscape ever changing and pleasing to the eye. We are now in the lake region of the county, where Wononscopomuc reflects Mount Riga, and Washining and Washinee serve as mirrors for Bald Mountain. Salisbury is the place of schools—Hotchkiss and the Austin for boys and the Taconic for girls. As you drive along its elm-shaded streets the sweet chimes from the Scoville Library strike the hour. It is no wonder that the Shepherd of Salisbury tends his scattered flock year after year, resisting the allurements of other larger sheepfolds. One cannot blame him if he prefers to continue Bishop of Salisbury, rather than to become a Canon of Westminster. Salisbury, like many another town in our mountain county, is a hard place to go away from. Being very near to the land of Canaan may have something to do with it. Through that land with its "green fields" and "swelling floods"

The Finest Drive in the World

we take our homeward way until we come again to Norfolk. Standing by the meeting house and looking off toward the sunset, if you do not say that you have taken the finest drive in the world, then immediately you will be counted out from the select "four hundred" who were born in Litchfield County.







“The old gray house with low slanting roof, and the well-sweep.”

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

VI

White Roses and Clover Blooms

HOW true it is, as Mr. Beecher once said, that men do not feed entirely through their mouths! Eyes, ears and souls must all the time be fed, if the life is to be a healthful one. The dweller amid such beauties as our beloved county affords may indeed feed the highest in him, if he only will. There is hardly a home that has not its hardy roses, and clover fields are everywhere, while apple and cherry blooms in their season make the landscape beautiful and the world delightful. Familiar odors that awaken holiest memories float in the air on the June morning, wafted from the old white rose bush, standing by the well-worn threshold of the door through which childhood's feet often passed. We see again a dear face bending over us, to give a parting kiss, along with a rose from the nearby bush. We hear again a voice—was it not the sweetest in the world to us?—bidding us good-bye, as we started off with dinner pail to the old red school house by the mountain. Ah, what pictures the fragrance of rose and syringa brings before the mind, and how the eyes moisten as we behold them! We see it all again—the old gray house with low slanting roof, the well-sweep which brought up the coldest water to quench our thirst, the great barn

White Roses and Clover Blooms

with the swallows darting in and out, the orchard stretching down the slope with cool, inviting shadows, and the sunset's light upon the distant hilltops. We see again the wide-stretching clover fields, the delight of our boyhood, so aptly described by Sidney Lanier:

"Up the sky

The hesitating moon slow trembles on,
Faint as a new-washed soul but lately up
From out a buried body. Far about,
A hundred slopes in hundred fantasies
Most ravishingly run, so smooth of curve
That I but seem to see the fluent plain
Rise toward a rain of clover-blooms, as lakes
Pout gentle mounds of plashment up to meet
Big shower-drops. Now the little winds as bees
Bowing the blooms come wandering where I lie
Mixt soul and body with the clover tufts,
Light on my spirit, give from wing and thigh
Rich pollens and divine sweet irritants
To every nerve, and freshly make report
Of inmost Nature's secret inborn thought
Unto some soul of sense within my frame
That owns each cognizance of the outlying five,
And sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches, all in one."

There is certainly a blessed gospel in these sweet perfumes, distilled in Nature's laboratory. What would the world be without them, we often ask. We might well query what men and women would be without them. As children they fed upon daisy banks and clover fields. Their chubby hands held a bunch of "posies" almost as soon as the proverbial rattle. They early began to love

White Roses and Clover Blooms

sweet odors from flower blooms. Nothing is more common than to see a child with his nose deep in amongst the flower petals, like some bright golden-throated humming bird. These are recording certain impressions upon heart and brain. The eye is being trained to love the beautiful and hate the ugly. The perfume of white roses and clover blooms is stencilling certain truths upon the inmost soul. The memory works through the nose, as well as through the eyes and ears. Thus the gospel of the gentle and the innocent is preached by these angels with vari-colored wings. That gospel will not soon be forgotten, even in the midst of the world's sin and confusion of tongues.

The child who is to be an author ought to spend the days of childhood in the atmosphere of books, they tell us. The boy or girl who is to be an artist should live amongst the famous pictures of the creators of the Golden Age of Art, and amid the grandest works of God. These associations are formative of tastes, appetites and aptitudes. They hang the soul's halls and chambers with beautiful pictures, and line its walls with books. How much more, when you would produce a man or woman of fine mould and pure life, in touch with all the best things, swayed by the memories of flowers and birds and sweet and subtle odors, ought you to bring the child up with rose gardens, clover fields and cherry blossoms. These things must pull strongly on the cords of the heart, and keep many a man and woman from the baser life, when temptations are strong upon them. Such surroundings help in making character, but are

White Roses and Clover Blooms

not necessarily saviors of men. We should, however, learn to use them for just what they are worth, and no more.

The clover blooms, like the swan's song, are the sweetest in death. Behold the clover field when the mowers have laid the white and crimson heads low on a Summer



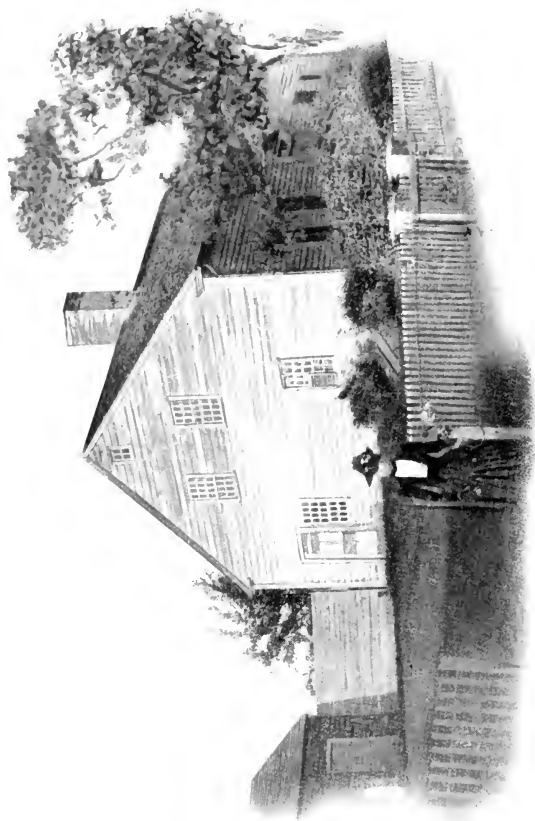
"At evening time it fills the old barn."

morning! The bees went down with them, and still continue to search for honey, buzzing about amongst the stalks. As the sun mounts higher, the boy comes whistling afield, and tosses the clover blooms with his fork, spreading them evenly over the meadow. Now the air is full of sweetest and most bewitching odors. Blended

White Roses and Clover Blooms

with the fragrance of the newly mown hay, the scent of the clover blooms seems intensified, as that of rose leaves in the rose jar. At evening time it fills the old barn, is breathed out through the wide open doors, and clings to one's garments, as he takes a refreshing drink at the old well. The delicious fragrance of the flowers and the new-mown hay is as free as the air, for all the air is laden with it. You need not own the field or plant the rose bushes, but may enjoy your neighbor's if you will. Blessed is the man, however, who plants rose bushes in his garden and sows clover in his fields for the bees and men. To make the world more beautiful is to help in making characters more beautiful.





"The house was a story and a half high, large and rambling."

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

VII

A Deserted Farm

ALL about the county there are deserted farms. They have gone back to Nature, aside from a stretch of meadow or a bit of arable land that some one cultivates on shares. You shall see the crumbling chimney, a clump of lilac bushes, some straggling spotted lilies by the old well, and a cellar half filled with rotten timber. Here is the smoothly worn stone doorstep, pressed by the feet of three generations, and sitting down upon it and looking off toward the Delectable Mountains the imagination restores the old homestead to its former glory.

The house was a story and a half high, large and rambling, with a huge chimney in the centre. This was built partly of stone and partly of brick, and had in the kitchen an immense fireplace. The children loved to stand within its capacious arch at night and see the stars. Colonies of chimney swallows were at home in it during the summer, and the whirr of their wings could be heard by day, and the soft call of the mother bird to her young at night. The snow drove down the chimney and made the fire sputter, while the wind made eddies on the

A Deserted Farm

hearth, miniature tornadoes, to the delight of the children. The kitchen was long and narrow, and was the living room for the large family. On the front of the house were a sitting room and a parlor, with an entrance hall between them, and opening off the kitchen a pantry and a bedroom. The sitting room was used for the cold winter evenings and for receiving friendly calls, while the parlor was opened only on state occasions. Both rooms held diminutive stoves, with large heating capacity. Running round chimney was a favorite amusement, when the cousins came on a visit. Through kitchen, parlor, hall, and sitting room the lads chased the lassies, and had their reward if not too bashful to take it. In the parlor there were a funeral and a wedding, when a son went away to the home prepared for him, and a daughter to make one for herself. The house swarmed with life, for there were ten children who called it home, and many cousins who lived near by. What shoutings and merrymakings were here; what hopes and fears and glad anticipations! This old cellar was filled with potatoes, apples and other good things. Those now scrubby trees down yonder used to be laden with russets, greenings and seek-no-farthens in the old days. How they welcomed the boys and girls, as they came with baskets, bags and barrels to gather the Autumn store! Where the weeds and brambles grow so luxuriously was the garden, containing not only the usual vegetables, but sage, thyme and sweet marjoram. Down through the centre of it, by the side of the walk, grew old-fashioned flowers, pinks, bachelor buttons,

A Deserted Farm

four-o'clocks, verbenas, stocks and many others known only to the mother of the house, who loved them all and cared for them as she did for her children. As you swung the garden gate there was a bed of fennel—"meeting seed"—on one side, with caraway, while on the other there was tansy. They are all gone but the tansy. Bravely it blossoms still out there by that broken down stone wall. Some plants and shrubs cling to the soil better than men and women. The great world does not tempt them so much.

This farm was rocky, but by no means sterile. It used to produce finely under its owner's careful cultivation. It fed and clothed and educated ten children, and in the mean time paid for itself. When its owner came to it with his wife and five children he was obliged to go into debt heavily in order to possess a home for his wife and growing family. How it was paid for will be a mystery, only in this instance we know it was done honestly. The father rented a pew in the meeting house four miles away, dressed his children suitably for meeting and for school, gave to missions at home and abroad, paid his bills, and after long years of hard, self-denying labor cleared the farm of debt. It was done on the coöperative plan. The mother was cook, butter and cheese maker, dressmaker and tailor. It was no unusual thing for her to make a garment for one of the children after they had retired for the night, and that by hand, for sewing machines were then unknown. Children by the age of nine or ten became bread winners. They not only helped indoors

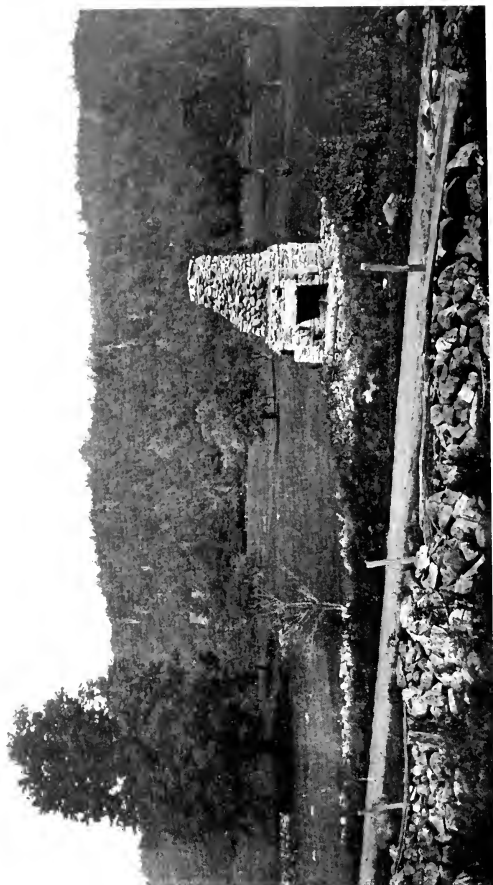
A Deserted Farm

and out, but actually did many things whereby money was earned. In the Summer they gathered mint and herbs for the family doctor, and in the Autumn picked up chestnuts and walnuts, which were sold to buy boots and shoes. During the long Winter evenings, when the lessons were disposed of, they put on hooks and eyes. These were gotten at the country store—a bag of hooks and a bag of eyes and a bundle of cards. Some were stuck on and some sewed on. Gathered about the long table, with a pile of hooks and another of eyes in front of them, they “ran races,” to see who could put them on the fastest. On Saturdays there were stints to be done before sliding down hill or going off on some looked and longed for excursion. The table was supplied in this way with tea and sugar, and the children with many articles of clothing. Habits of industry were thus early formed. Life was not all a play spell. They early knew the worth of things, albeit it was at times at the expense of going without them. Having earned shoes, they were more interested in taking care of them. There was no piano in the house, there were no music lessons, no skates, and no sleds except the home-made ones. The boy never owned a sled until he went away from home, save perhaps one made either by himself or his father. Playthings there were none, save those that were given from without the home, or were of home construction. A hard life, you say? Yes, it was a hard life in a way, but of necessity. Still, there were wonderful compensations. The dear parents would not have chosen to have gone without so

A Deserted Farm

many things, or have had their children go without them, but they would pay their debts, secure an education for their children, give them religious advantages, and themselves have the luxury of fulfilling the Master's command to preach the Gospel to every creature. Not being able to go themselves, they would send. They had to work, and they wasted no sympathy on their children who had to labor.

Some one may ask how it was that this farm came to be abandoned. It came about in a natural way. The children grew up and began going away from home. The boys went to the academy, and two of them to college, where they paid their own way for the most part. The other son preferred a trade to the farm, and the father said that if the boys did not care to work the land he would not keep it. So it was sold, and the family that still remained moved into the village, near to church and postoffice. Then there came swift changes in the old homestead. The land was not so carefully tilled by the next owner. After a while he died, and the widow rented out land and sold the hay, a sure way to run down the best of farms. Then the house was closed Winters, and finally the owner moved away to live with one of her married children. It was rented afterward to one of those gypsy farmers who move almost annually. Without repairs the house soon became untenable, stood with open doors and broken window panes, was occupied now and then by some tramp who made his coffee on the hearth and cursed his luck in the old kitchen where the loved household



“Storms and snows and rains all had a hand at its destruction.”

A Deserted Farm

was wont to kneel at family devotions. And so it went on, and storms and snows and rains all had a hand at its destruction, until the farm was sold for a few hundred dollars, in place of thousands that it once brought. The last owner cut off the beautiful timber for logs and firewood, and then abandoned it. He comes on a Sunday to look after and bring salt to some cattle that he is pasturing in the fields, grown up to brush so that he finds the herd with difficulty. He has stretched a barbed wire along the top of the tumble-down stone wall, felled some brush and patched up a line fence, and gone his way.

The old farm lives in the memory of its past, and holds dear the scenes of other days, when its lovers and friends made it to blossom and bring forth abundantly. Its pleasure now, aside from thinking of the past, is to nestle and nourish every living thing, to welcome the dewy mornings and the rosy sunsets from its hill-top, to live in the songs of the birds and the abundant wild vegetation, which, wandering out from stone wall sides and fence corners, is taking possession of the soil. And the old farm is glad that anything is willing, content and happy to stay upon it: that the birds and the wild flowers and the berries make it their home; that Summer sunshine and Winter's warm blanket of snow still abide with it; for God does not abandon the old farm.



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

VIII

The Old Red School House

THE historian inquiring into the reasons for the intellectual accomplishments and public service of the men and women of Litchfield County during the nineteenth century will find one of the most potent in the old Red School House. For the most part their education was begun and completed therein. On its hard plank benches they sat during their A B C period, and at its desks wrought upon their arithmetic, grammar and geography. It was kindergarten, primary grammar school and academy all in one. The little ones "toed the crack" while they spelled words of one syllable, and the grown up boys declaimed from the floor in front of the desk,

"Stand, the ground's your own, my braves,"

or Fitz-Greene Halleck's immortal words,

"At midnight, in his guarded tent.

The Turk lay dreaming of the hour

When Greece, her knee in suppliance bent,

Should tremble at his power."

The very bashful young man, tall and overgrown, embarrassed beyond all control, found himself ap-

The Old Red School House

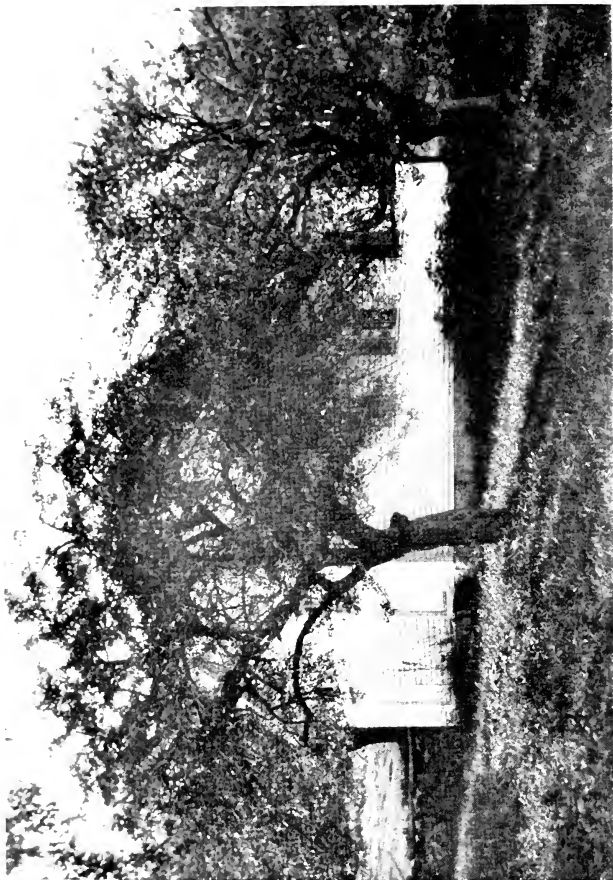
proaching nearer and nearer to the stove, until his hands, stretched out in a sort of despair, clutching at a straw, came near embracing the stovepipe. Those patriotic declamations, how they fired the soul; what visions of battlefields, and heroes, and statesmen! As we declaimed Webster's reply to Haynes in the United States Senate, or those words of the eloquent Patrick Henry, our souls expanded with the inspiring thoughts, and we preferred death to the loss of liberty. These declamations of the district school did much to impress upon the minds of the pupils the worthy literature of the past. In my own case, I formed a taste for the best poetry and prose in that way. The reading books were carefully made up of selections from the best authors. The Bible, too, was read every morning, or, more properly, the New Testament. Every scholar had to have a copy along with his school books. That was worth something—to make that book one of those used in the school, and so possessed by every scholar. The Bible as literature must have made a profound impression upon the minds of those thus reading it in school. Some there were who would not read it elsewhere, or hear it often read.

At this time, of course, the girls had not thought of going to college, and the boy who went was almost as distinguished as the man who now goes in search of the North Pole. Such breadth of education required, of course, genius in the teacher. It should be said, however, that the ungraded school of those early days in the country districts of our county was virtually divided into two grades by the Summer and Winter terms. In

The Old Red School House

the Summer the little folks all went, down to the abecedarians, while the older ones helped on the farm or about the house. The girls had the advantage over the boys, for many of them could have both the Summer and Winter terms. The lad of twelve or even younger had only the Winter months for his education. The school held from December to March, inclusive, for the Winter term, and about twelve weeks in the Summer; possibly longer if the school money held out.

The old Red School House which the writer has in mind stood within eight miles of the county seat, sheltered by a mountain on the northwest and within easy distance of the Shepaug River. Before it flowed a trout brook, with its swimming holes, while an old orchard covered the hillside in the rear. The building was low and roomy, with entry ways, and dark wood closets, which were used on occasion for bad boys or girls. Around three sides, under the windows, ran a wide desk decorated with the jackknives and the ink of generations of scholars. Parallel with the desks were backless benches. While writing or studying the pupil sat at the desk facing the windows and the apple trees, while for recitation or spelling the feet were swung over the bench, and the edge of the desk served as back. The modern school desks, with their patent seats, came into the county about 1850. Along with these new seats came blackboards, maps and modern school apparatus. The youngsters sat on low benches made of planks with holes bored in them for the legs. These, of course, had no backs, and the discomfort of those little tots can easily



“Sheltered by a mountain on the northwest.”

The Old Red School House

be imagined as they twisted around on those hard benches with nothing to do.

For heating, there was the large open Franklin stove, which at times "beat back the frost with tropic heat" and at others made it its chief business to smoke. It depended upon the wind in part. The older boys and girls were equal in age to those who now are in college. The common school education was not completed until later in life, owing to the fact that for most of the older ones it must all be gotten in the Winter months. It was customary, too, in beginning a new term with a new teacher to begin the textbook at the beginning, since the teacher had no other way of knowing where each pupil belonged. Then, too, the teacher could show great progress in this way under his instruction. The apt scholar had little advantage over the dull one in the ground traversed. There was an element of discouragement in this for the best pupils. Of course it was often true that certain scholars in the school became as familiar with the work gone over as the teacher, and were thus fitted to teach themselves. Such would do what would be called now independent work, mostly in mathematics, "hard sums." The Winter's teacher was ordinarily a farmer from the neighborhood, who drove a number of miles and took care of his stock, or one of the grown-up sons, who taught Winters and worked on the farm Summers. Such a man had no theory of teaching save what he had worked out himself. He taught oftentimes by main strength. If he was muscular and alert, then he would succeed in a way in "keeping

The Old Red School House

school." There were, however, men and women who were educational enthusiasts, who inspired their pupils with a genuine thirst for knowledge. It was more than likely that this thirst had been unquenched on their part. They had heard the river of knowledge as it swept by them, but themselves had drunk only of the least rivulets. So much the more those self-sacrificing men and women pointed out the river to their pupils, and encouraged them to drink deeply of its waters.

The old Red School House remains, however, a mystery. There were no modern textbooks, no theories of education, no grades, no continuity of teaching, by reason of the frequent changes of teachers. And yet results were achieved wholly beyond what would seem possible. There was a love for knowledge which was historic, perseverance in the face of difficulties, and an independence in working out results which was amazing. The student was an explorer in unknown regions. Even his teacher-guide knew little of that land of knowledge through which they were travelling together. Through long Winter nights, in front of the crackling logs, they worked out their problems independently, afterward comparing results. Sometimes the teacher was ahead, and sometimes the scholar. They saw only the low horizons of history, poetry and literature in the books which they had access to, but they were moved to make the horizon of to-day the camping place of to-morrow. Intellectual shrewdness was developed, and a marvellous receptivity. The pupils did not tire of knowledge. It always tasted good to them. They knew the cost of an

The Old Red School House

education in hard work, and that made it appreciated. They knew the Winter's term would be short, and that much must be crowded into it. Sturdy in body and strong in will, they became heroic without knowing it.

It need not seem strange to us that certain definite results flowed naturally from an education gotten thus in the old Red School House. One of them was tenacity of purpose. The Litchfield County man has been noted for holding on. Like "Bud Means' " dog, "Heaven and yarth couldn't make him let go." He stuck to the rocky farm, and made it bud and blossom as the rose. He held steadily to the faith of his fathers, although the mystery was profound and the theology beyond his comprehension. He held to awakened ideals of education, although they could only be realized in his sons and daughters. The goal once fixed, he fastened his eyes upon it, and reached out toward it with all his might, though mountains of difficulties lay between him and it. He was trained to this by the school and the farm, both of which taught him to endure hardship and laugh at obstacles.

Another result was independence of character. The way of knowledge was no fixed path for every student to follow. He blazed his way, as did Horace Bushnell, a graduate of the old Red School House. It mattered not how the problem was solved, so long as it was solved. It mattered not how the preparation for college was gotten, so long as it was gotten. He came to think that it was better to make a way than to find one. Such training produced inventors, explorers, improvers on the



.. He stuck to the rocky farm, and made it bud and blossom like a rose."

The Old Red School House

past. This Yankee trait was fostered, if not born, in the district school.

The heroic element has been spoken of, but should have more than a passing word. Our county has been the fruitful soil for the growth of heroic men and women. No distinction ought to be made, for although the women have not figured so much in the public eye they have no less possessed themselves of heroic souls. The mother of a hero must be a heroine. She must fire the soul of her son for great tasks worthily accomplished. Without the right influences of the school her work cannot be made perfect. Easy tasks easily accomplished, ways made smooth for the feet of our sons and daughters, their wills weakened by frequent yielding to difficulties, do not nourish heroic, self-sacrificing souls.

Farewell to the old Red School House! Its work is done. Here and there one decorates the countryside, but its walls no longer resound to the hum of a half hundred boys and girls. Its paths are grass-grown, its door is half off its hinges. The children of the district—if there are any—are carried in a wagon, hired by the school money, to the busy centre of industry and life. In the mean time the old Red School House dreams of bygone days.





"Now you hear nothing but a choked, gurgling sound."

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

IX

A Highway in Winter

HAD you only seen it in the Summer time you could hardly believe it the same road. Winter changes roads just as it does brooks. Yonder trout stream which you followed last June is the same, and yet not the same. It was singing over the stones free and happy then, darting under the bridge and playing hide and seek through the alders. It served as a beautiful looking glass for all the fairies and the little girls who waded in it with their white bare feet. Now you hear nothing but a choked, gurgling sound, as the poor brook crawls along under the ice. The alders do not even hide it on this mid-Winter day, but are frosted over like the ghosts of their former selves. Down in the meadow where you took that half-pound trout out of the deep pool there is no stream to be seen, for the snow has drifted over it from bank to bank, the warmest kind of a blanket. The thirsty cattle from a nearby barnyard are searching for water, which they can hear but cannot see. The boy decides to help them get to it, and, shovelling off the snow, cuts a hole through the ice,

A Highway in Winter

until the cold water rises through the clefts made by his axe, and the grateful cows crowd around to get a drink.

The highway in the Summer time was full of life and beauty. The trees that overhung it were the nesting places for birds, while the squirrels chased in and out of the stone wall and cracked nuts on the lower branches of the hickory tree all through the Fall. Happy children went singing on their way to school, stopping to make daisy chains or to play in the little rivulet at the foot of the hill. Lovers sauntered along, plucking the roadside flowers and forgetting the errands upon which they had been sent. The hedgerows on either side were bright with color, while grasshoppers, crickets and katydids filled the air with their strident music by night and by day. A wagon load of people going off for a day's outing stopped at the top of the hill to admire the wide-sweeping view. Everything tempted one to loiter and enjoy the restful sights and sounds.

Now all is changed, and you are not just certain where the highway is. Looking across the landscape, you can just see what appears to be a fence of some kind on one side, but on the other side there is only the level expanse of snow. It has driven over the wall and filled the road to the depth of several feet. Here is a mountain chain stretching right across the road with overhanging cliffs, which the boy, exploring these white mountains, cuts off with a stick and watches the avalanche as it tumbles down. The wind was busy all night, and moved the snow out of the meadow into the road.

A Highway in Winter

The trees have become way-marks, and the farmer knows that the road is somewhere midway between them. Since the children must go to school a mile away, and the girls cannot wade through the snow, the road must be broken out.

The strong, slow oxen are yoked up and hitched to the great wood sled, shovels are brought out and a start is made. For a time the patient animals plod through the snowdrifts, but after a bit they come to our mountain chain, which must be cut through. The snow here has sifted together hard, the particles packing closely together, and it may be cut out in cubes like solid chunks of loaf sugar and thrown on either side of the path which is being made. Or the farmer thought it so much work that when he came to the next Alpine chain of drifts he concluded to go around. Out in the field the ground is nearly bare, for to help out the sleighing the snow has nearly all come into the highway. So he takes down the fence, or turns out through a bar-way, and goes through the meadow and then out into the pasture, and so back into the road once more. It is not the best of sleighing out there, for the runners hit against the stones and scrape over the bare ground. Passing by night over the path thus made, the sparks will fly from the steel shoes of the sleigh.

There is one frequenter of the country in Winter who is independent of the highway, and that is the fox. He crosses and recrosses it, however, just for sociability. The boy often found his tracks, but only once did he see the fox himself. 'Then he looked at the lad in a sur-

A Highway in Winter

prised sort of way, and wandered slowly along, saying to himself, "No gun." Foxes have a way of sticking to their own roads, for you cannot help but notice that they cross the highway in almost the same place day after day. The hunter takes advantage of this characteristic, and stations himself by the fox's road to shoot him as he goes by, fleeing from the dogs.

How silent a highway is in Winter as compared with the Summer! The wind is blowing straight from the north, carrying stinging particles of snow with it, which cut the face and blind the eyes. The boys and girls on their way to and from school turn their backs to the wind, and thus walk backward until they get their breath. Passing through the grove down in the hollow, they think they hear a sound and stop to listen. In the hemlocks below the road they hear a soft, cheery call, and stop to watch a chickadee foraging for his supper. At another time they listen to the lonely, ghostlike rap, rap of the woodpecker, as he works for his Winter's bread and butter. At night one hears the frost cracking the ice down in the gorge, and sometimes a sharp report made in the freezing snow by the side of the road.

On moonlight nights the highway, where it drops down the steep hill, is the gathering place for all the boys and girls of the neighborhood. They come from the farm houses far and near to coast down the Long Hill, as it is called. John went over and asked Susan to go with him. The home-made sled, shod with steel and made to carry only two, glides down the steep snow-clad hillside, to the merry sounds of shouts and laugh-

A Highway in Winter

ter. They may chance to overturn occasionally into the soft snow by the side of the road, but that only calls forth louder shrieks and laughter. Exercise and excitement make them to forget the cold, and the Winter highway, that ordinarily has such a dull time, is most happy to give the lovers such pleasure.

At another time, when the highway stretched away for miles over hills and through the valleys, with the snow packed solidly under foot, the sleighs with merry loads went creaking over it. The bells, large, jolly, whole-souled bells, made of genuine bell metal, jingled furiously, but could not drown the merriment of the young men and maidens going to singing school, where they are drilled by the old singing master who taught in all the neighborhood.

On another afternoon the farmer and his wife pass quietly over the highway for a Winter's visit with some relatives in an adjoining neighborhood, staying to tea and driving home by the moonlight. This is about all the recreation they have, and it rests them and makes them feel young and sentimental again.

The highway is never more beautiful in Winter than when there has been an ice storm. Then every tree is laden down with its icy fruit, and all the grass blades and weed stalks left over from last Autumn have grown to several times their natural size. The stones in the wall and the fence rails shine like glass, while diamonds and brilliants sparkle everywhere. As the sun comes up the ice begins to fall upon the hard crust of the snow, making Nature's crystal bells to ring most



“Every tree is laden down with its icy fruit.”

A Highway in Winter

sweetly. At such a time some of the trees, particularly the white birches, become very reverent, bowing clear to the ground beneath their heavy weight of ice. They seem to know that there are troubles that it is better to bow before than to stand up under and be broken by them.

This much is true, that, though one may not enjoy the New England Winter, the Summer is more appreciated because of the sharp contrast. The child, they say, always loves the Winter time, and it is a mark of age to dread its coming and to wish to escape from its rigor. Cold and snow help in hardening the moral muscles, and they who are trained by Northern Winters are more ready to carry on a successful warfare against all other opposing forces. He who has plodded over a highway in Winter cheerfully and courageously will make more rapid progress on life's highway, which must ever have its Winter's days.



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

X

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

THE wire fence is that of the modern farmer, and is extravagant because he must go to town and buy it, and cruel if he uses, as he too often does, the barbed wire. One could stroll in the ante-bellum days through the pastures and down by the brooksides unmolested and unafraid. The fences were either stone walls or rail affairs of various patterns. No signs, so common nowadays, stared one in the face, "Hunting and Fishing Forbidden Here." The farmer, if you met him, inquired after your catch of fish, and told you where there was a splendid hole, down under the roots of the old tree, or just below the mill dam. The farmer's dog wagged his tail, as much as to say, "Good luck to you, boy." Now all is different. You wade down a brook through tangled alders and wild grapevines, and come suddenly upon barbed wires stretched across it. You look up and see the almost universal sign, warning you that you are trespassing. Or, if the warning is not there, you are surprised by the farmer while lying flat upon your stomach trying to throw into a nearby pool.

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

He comes angrily upon you, his dog snarling before him, and begins to curse and to swear, or at least to call you more names than has any English lord. You supposed that the brook was free, did not know that the owner objected, and end by laying a piece of money in his hand, at which he is pacified, and goes back to put out more barbed wire fence and teach his dog to drive off all intruders. Some foreigners who have bought up the old farms are especially cantankerous about other people poaching on their preserves. They learned their lesson in the Old Country, where, I suppose, they understood the gentle art of poaching. The grandfathers of other days would no more have taken money for the fishing privilege of their brooks than they would have broken the Ten Commandments. A few of their sons are still living, and make the life of the trout fisherman endurable. Such farmers welcome you to their brooks and their homes, put your horse in the stable, invite you to have a "bite" with them, ask for the news of the town, and act like social human beings, citizens of a free country, where all are brothers.

There is nothing poetical in the wire fence; it is prosaic and commonplace to a degree. Neither is there anything substantial about it. It is here this year, moved the next, and lying on the ground because of a rotten post the year after. It is inartistic, since you cannot have any color scheme connected with it, and no hedge-row grows naturally near it.

There was a fence which one might often see in our county in the old days, but whether used now I do not

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

know. The boy was set to build one about a turnip patch on an August day. His father, having an errand in town, gave him as his stint (we used to call it "stent") the building of the fence, telling him that when the work was done he could go a-fishing. The turnip patch was in the angle of the field, and the new fence was the base of the triangle. There was to be about a dozen rods of this fence, and the material was all on the ground. The boy accepted the challenge, looked at the job and fell to work, as was his wont, with all his might. The fence was to be that of the shiftless man, called "shad." Why, the boy did not know then, and does not until this day. Possibly it was because the rails when set in place resembled the bones in the dorsal fin of a shad. A beginning was made by piling up two or three stones, as large as the builder could well handle. Then, a rail having been laid in place, one end on the stones and the other on the ground, two stakes were driven in place and the next rail laid, one end on the ground and the other in the stake, and so on until the job was finished. It meandered across the field at the will of the builder, and when done was pretty sure to arrest the attention of the passer by and the progress of sheep and cattle.

Such a fence was not as picturesque as the "Virginia rail," a most common fence in the days when timber was cheap and plenty. This is still to be seen, but for the most part the rails are covered with lichens and bear other marks of age. It zig-zagged across the



...It zig-zagged across the field."

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

field, the corners of the rails being crossed, and when well built those same corners were fortified with stakes and caps. The boy with the big auger helped to make those same caps on a rainy day, along with some bar-posts. This kind of fence fairly made a bid for berry-bushes and golden rod to hide in its friendly corners, out of the way of the plough and the mowing machine, and the bitter-sweet and Jacob's ladder to climb its rail ends and stakes. What a place for meditation and whittling the top rail was for the boy, while the cows wandered along leisurely toward the let-down pasture bars nearby! The cows had time enough, and so did the boy. Very likely a woodchuck has burrowed in a nearby corner of the fence, taking advantage of the security offered by the friendly hedgerow. Not seeing the boy, who for the time being has stopped his whistle, he pokes his wise nose out of the hole, comes out and sits down upon the observation mound at its mouth, and with his two front feet hanging by his side stands for a moment at attention. Not discovering the enemy near, he concludes it is safe to accept the invitation of a nearby clover field to come to supper. The boy came upon him once unawares, and he had to hide in an old stone wall, where he in turn whistled angrily at the boy, who worried him with a long stick. Old stone walls are strong fortresses for the woodchucks when they are disturbed by humans. But that fortress was not always impregnable when attacked by a shrewd man and a wise old dog. The farmer removed a few stones, and Rover did the rest.

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

Stone walls are the fences of the industrious, enterprising farmer. His material is all furnished by Nature on the ground, and has the immense advantage of being indestructible. More than that, it is material which was in the way of the scythe and the plough, and later of the mowing machine. To remove the stones from the field and build them into a strong, durable and artistic stone wall, "Hic labor, hoc opus est."

This farmer, however, loves to work, and is never happier than when he has some stony field to clear and fence. The enemy is worthy of his courage and muscle. He is a pioneer clearing the soil, a benefactor of the world making another acre or two of arable land, a creator both of a new field and a new fence. A generation ago stone walls were fashionable. It was worth going through the county just to see their long straight lines stretching across the fields. It is to be noted that a college professor from New York City is again introducing this well-nigh lost art into the State and county. These walls of the old days were sometimes made of very large stones piled up one on another, a single thickness of them, tapering off at the top with smaller stones. Of such a fence the farmer was wont to say somewhat sneeringly, "You could throw a cat through it." Other walls were built wide enough to drive cart and oxen on the top of them, and would make a good fortification for another Gettysburg. When the mowing machines came in they were a wonderful incentive to wall building. One improvement forces another, as the bicycles and automobiles testify with re-

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

gard to public highways. It was at first thought that mowing machines could not be used in stony fields. That fallacy has been pretty well exploded, for they are using them now in any field where you can drive a cart.

Stone walls and fences have to do with character. Suppose the boy had never built any other kind of



“Stone walls and fences have to do with character.”

fence but the shad variety of other days, which, by the way, was finished by two o'clock and followed by a fishing excursion. It was easily built and easily destroyed, and the builder need not be a skilled workman. There were no special obstacles to be overcome and no great difficulties to be encountered. It need not be built with plumb line and sighting stakes. Any-

Stone Walls and Shad Fences

body could build a shad fence at any time. Not so the stone wall, for difficulties lay in the making from first to last. The stones, set firmly in the soil, were hard to lift and harder to break. They had a way of smashing one's fingers. The boy disliked them because they were always getting in the way of his big toes. He thought they grew on the meadows, so often was he set to pick them up. Then there must be preparation made for the good stone wall by digging to below the frost line and laying the large footing stones in place. All the stones, little and big, must be laid true to the line and on a secure bed. One rod a day was a good stint for two men and a boy, with the help of a strong yoke of oxen. Such work develops hardihood, accuracy, moral muscle. He who has built stone wall is quite ready to undertake any of the great tasks of life. In New Preston, Horace Bushnell built stone wall on a college vacation to forget the toothache. It was Horace Greeley, was it not, who said the stones of New England had been the potent cause of the character of its men? These men, like Horace Bushnell, became pioneers in the great West, or, as he did, pioneers in the world's thought land, blazing a way for others to follow. Nothing can daunt such men, for they have built stone wall.



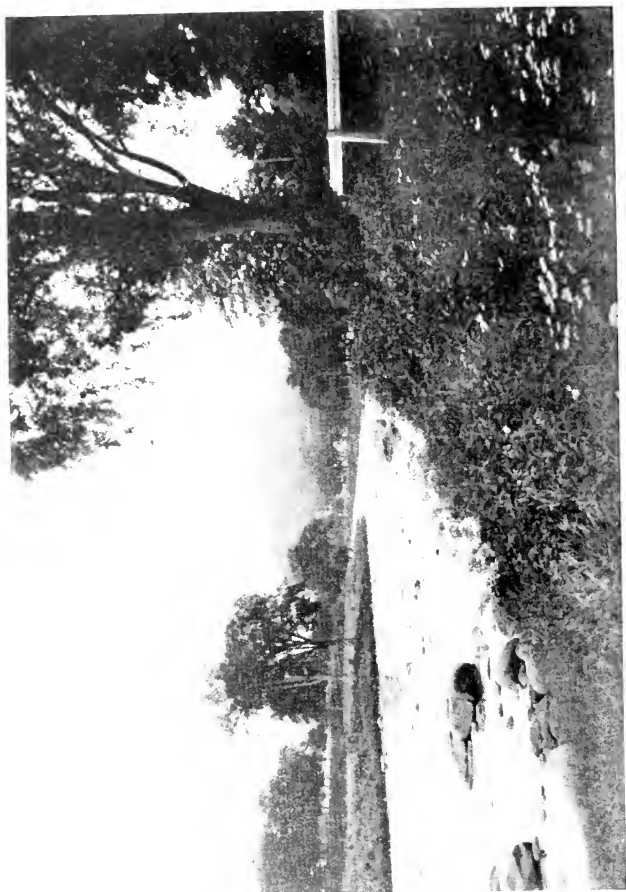
LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XI

Trout Brooks

SHOULD you ask some of the sons of Litchfield County concerning the most fascinating bits of scenery within her borders, they would be sure to tell you that these were to be found along her many trout streams running among the hills. These will give you, it is true, only what we have called bits of scenery, but they are like those bits of Venetian tear vases from the old Roman tombs, valued not for their size but for their marvellous beauty. It is doubtful whether any one can enjoy these leaping, rushing, gurgling, laughing streams quite as much as he who goes a-fishing.

Everybody knows that there is fishing and fishing. That is not the best in which you catch fish simply. You can get all the glory of the mountain and the morning, tingling nerves and warm, rich blood, even though your creel may be empty. The recreation of fishing is quite independent of the fish. The ideal fisherman fishes not to fill his basket, but for appetite and health, for communion with Nature and with himself, for life's best wine drunk in with the pure air, for the sunshine and the bird notes. These he may always "catch." The



“In a treetop, on some rise of ground, where he gets the first peep of day in his eyes.”

Trout Brooks

pursuit of the fish or the game just gives zest to the trip, and furnishes a good excuse for his being out of doors in the Springtime. To know the beauties of our mountain county you must follow the trout brooks through woods and meadows until they lose themselves in the rivers. You certainly will not know the charm of these hills to the full until you do.

You are going a-fishing for trout, then, and will take a friend along with you. It is a proof of friendship that you should ask him to go, for at such times men get close together, and tell each other their hopes and fears, their plans and purposes. The morning dawns bright and clear, for you have watched for the warm morning after the Spring rain. The phœbe bird salutes you from the ridge of the old barn as you pass out into the presence of the new day. The robin chorus was finished while you were dressing and taking your hasty breakfast. By the way, what a fine chorus it is, with the catbird for a soloist! The leader evidently spends his nights in a treetop, on some rise of ground, where he gets the first peep of day in his eyes. Immediately he sounds his waking call, and straightway is answered by one here and another there, until the trees of the wood and the orchard seem full of the members of this Litchfield County choral union. The air fairly vibrates with their songs. They sing before breakfast, and the sun is no sooner up than their music dies away, and they all go a-fishing for worms on the lawn and in the meadow, and after that turn their attention to prospecting for nests and following architectural pursuits for their

Trout Brooks

working hours. You see that a pair of these musicians, having agreed to live together "until death do us part," have very nearly finished a nest in the cherry tree, which has decked itself in milk-white blossoms for the bridal and the homecoming. Passing down through the rows of pink and white apple trees, we hear the woodpecker



“ Now you hear the gurgling and purling of the brook.”

calling his mate from the dead limb of a tree, using it for a drum. White mist, like a soft bridal veil, hangs over the lower reaches of the brook which we purpose following. Like good fishermen, we choose to fish down the stream, and so follow a wood road far up the valley until we come to the upper reaches of the brook, where its cool waters are gathered from springs

Trout Brooks

that bubble up from mossy banks. As we adjust our fishing tackle—what excitement there is in getting ready to fish!—we hear the exquisite music of the wood thrush, as it comes up from the depths of the forest below. There is hardly any other bird which puts so much of mysterious melody into its singing, making you to dream of all sweet sounds and voices you have ever heard. Now you hear the gurgling and purling of the brook, as it winds in and out over the stones, or its soft plashing as it falls over some moss-covered rock. The yellow cowslips are flecking its banks, like glints of noonday sun. You creep cautiously up toward the bank of the stream, and let your hook float with the current as it swirls under an overhanging bank, where the bushes are provokingly in your way. Once, twice it follows down with the stream without attracting any attention. Little you know what sharp eyes are watching it, for the third time there is a break in the pool, a dash down the stream, a quick pull on the line, a thrill up the rod and through your arm, as you feel that the fish is hooked. These brook trout on the smaller streams do not ordinarily have to be played long, as their size is not great. Soon you have him in your basket, along with some fresh ferns, and have an opportunity of seeing the most beautiful fish that ever swam in water, the true *Salvelinus fontinalis*. The brook trout has well been called “the speckled beauty.” Behold him now as he lies there freshly taken from the cold water; how perfect his tapering form, built for speed like the racehorse, colored to suit the light or dark water in which he lives, and

Trout Brooks

never so beautiful as when just taken from a cold mountain stream and resting upon ferns or moss from his own brookside!

As we follow along there is time to note the familiar white blossoms of the shad-bush (*Amelanchier*), among the early blooms in the New England woods. The maples are beginning to show a tinge of red in their unfolding leaves; violets are scattered about with a lavish hand, while adder tongues and bloodroot peer out at you between mouldering logs and in fence corners. Clambering over one of the fallen giants of the forest, you sit down to rest a little, while your friend, coming up, shows you the contents of his basket, and both are reminded of the pocket luncheon which was brought along for just such a moment as this. So we sit there munching our bread and butter, swapping fish stories and listening to the music of the woods. Our lungs are filled with purest air, sweet water from the brook quenches our thirst, while the woodsy atmosphere surrounds us, causing us to pity the poor city people who neither know nor love the country, and those poorest of all poor people who never went a-fishing on a May morning in a wild mountain stream. This fisherman has fished for trout in a burn in Glen Argyle, flowing into Loch Katrine; in the woods of Michigan, and among the Green Mountains of Vermont; in the streams of Massachusetts in sight of the Holyoke range, and under the shadow of Mount Lafayette, in New Hampshire; but the streams of Litchfield County are dearer to him than all the rest combined, and more beautiful.

Trout Brooks

"O stream of the mountains, if answer of thine
Could rise from thy waters to question of mine,
Methinks through the din of thy thronged banks a moan
Of sorrow would swell for the days which have gone.

"Not for thee the dull jar of the loom and the wheel,
The gliding of shuttles, the ringing of steel;
But that old voice of waters, of bird and of breeze,
The dip of the wild fowl, the rustling of trees."

Alas, that so many of our dear old brooks are sadly changed! From lazy, laughing trout streams, playing at hide-and-seek all the day long, they have become working "water powers," with prosy lengths of mill dam and flume, and dull monotony of whirring wheels. We have come to put a mercantile value upon them, these rushing mountain torrents, and figure out what they are actually worth for the driving of dynamos or looms. Unfortunate, is it not, that in the progress of civilization we must sacrifice the beautiful to the useful?

On the other hand, some of these remote brooks are going back to their old-time wildness and idleness. It is no uncommon thing to find one in the northern part of the county, on the upper reaches of the Housatonic or the Farmington, with the old mill in ruins, the wheel stranded among the rocks and overgrown with Virginia creeper, more picturesque in death than in life, while a deep pool shows us where the mill dam stood long years ago. You may sit on the rocks and dream of the old days when the farmer's boy brought hither his grist upon the back of the family horse, waiting for it to be



• With the old mill in ruins."

Trout Brooks

ground, and in the mean time fishing off these same rocks, until the miller warned him that the millstone had done its work for him. The boy has grown to manhood now, and is a busy doctor in a far-away city. I wonder whether his heart does not long for the old days when he used to go a-fishing.



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XII

The Country Doctor

IT would be an open question as to which occupied the first place in the affections of the people of a country town, the minister or the doctor. The lawyer would not have to be considered, for few of the smaller towns had one, and for the most part had little use for one. The doctor, however, was indispensable. Sooner or later he found his way into almost every home. This particular doctor belonged to the whole southern tier of towns in our county. He rode a circuit of twenty miles or more. If you wanted him you would first go to his house, and then if he was not at home, as was usually the case, and the call was an urgent one, you would find where he was going, how long he had been away, and start out to run him down. He was often gone a day and a night, and sometimes two whole days, from home. On such long trips he used to put up where night overtook him, unless there were pressing calls farther on. He often spent the night at my father's house. I can see him now, rotund and jolly, his ruddy, weather-beaten face wreathed with smiles, with a kind word on his lips for all, especially the chil-

The Country Doctor

dren. Often as he met us returning from school he would stop and greet us with the cheery "Hello, bub!" "Hello, sis!" At such times he used to ask us to gather for him some of the different kinds of medicinal herbs which he used in his practice, rewarding us with pennies, greatly prized by our childish souls. His horse always had a weary look, and the carriage was bespattered with mud. He was accustomed to take out from under the seat a large medicine chest, to pat the children on the head, and follow them unannounced into the farm house kitchen. The mother was ordinarily the sick one, and he would enter the bedroom, sit down by the bed, look at the tongue, feel of the pulse, and tell a story. The story was as necessary a part of his medical practice as anything else. One of his patients said to him once, "Oh, doctor, I believe you would tell a story if I were dying." The reply was, "My dear madam, you are not dying," and then he would laugh and tell another story. "I was sent for," he said, "the other night to go in great haste to see a man who, his friends said, was very sick. I went, and found that he had been overeating, and told him that the best medicine for him was fasting and prayer. Then he would double up with laughter. He was a man withal of tender sympathies, eager to help his patients, but knowing all the time that their minds needed to be turned away from themselves. The story was not told for the sake of telling it so much as for the sake of the remedial effect which he had observed from that special kind of medication. He appreciated, too, the fact that "a merry

The Country Doctor

heart doeth good like a medicine," and so tried to light up the faces of those who watched beside the sick. Our country doctor was the foe of gloom and pessimism, and his coming into the sickroom was like the turning of the ocean's tide, and the bringing with its turning a strong salt breeze, full of the ozone of the wind-swept and water-kissed waves. He knew that medicines needed coöperating influences, and just so far as he could he set all these in motion by his presence and his words of hope and cheer.

This doctor was, of course, his own apothecary and carried his drug store with him. Coming from the sickroom, he would open that wonderful medicine chest, joke with the children who crowded around, and begin the task of picking out the remedies which were wanted. As memory recalls, few of the bottles were labelled, or the packages containing herbs or drugs. He would take out the cork, tip the bottle to his tongue, taste, shake his head and try again. Of the powders he would make trial in the same way until he found one which pleased him. Then he would mix up his doses, bitter concoctions oftentimes, every dose of which made one desire to get well as soon as possible; large, generous pills, which would go down only after several brave attempts, all mixed and made right before your eyes. These powders, pills and potions somehow were efficacious, although so disagreeable. I have always thought that the doctor's presence, his jolly good cheer, his hearty assurance, "Oh, I will fix you up something that will do you good!" did more than the medicines themselves. Here



“He was the ideal Good Samaritan.”

The Country Doctor

again it was "the man behind the gun" that was the needful thing. People had wonderful confidence in him, believed in him implicitly, took his medicines faithfully, and usually did get better.

Our doctor did not always practise what he preached, for he was accustomed to inveigh against green tea and warn his patients not to drink it. It was bad, he told them, for the stomach, for the nerves and for the liver. At a neighbor's he was asked if he would have some dandelion coffee, which he was always prescribing for other people, but he declined in favor of the green tea, which she had in the steaming teapot by her side. You could not expect, however, that doctors would take all of the medicine which they prescribed for other people!

This country doctor made no distinction between the rich and the poor, those who would pay him and those who would not. He visited all alike, and in all probability never collected half the bills due him. He took what came to him in money or in produce—wood, hay or oats—and went his way. He died not so very long ago, mourned by all the countryside. They had lost not only their beloved family doctor, but a friend as well. He was the ideal Good Samaritan. He never passed by on the other side. His own ease, convenience or pleasure did not enter into the question, and it is doubtful whether he ever consulted them. The man who needed him was the one whom he wished to see. He went to him cheerfully, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine which represented the best he had to give. He bore him on heart and mind back into the

The Country Doctor

land of health. If need be, he spent his own money in caring for him. Winter's snows, Spring mud and freshets, Summer heat, were all the same to him. Out of his warm bed in the dead of Winter he would get and travel across country through unbroken snowdrifts, to quiet some sick child or minister to the poor mother, and do it uncomplainingly—yea, cheerfully.

It was a hard life, harder than that of most men, not to say doctors. But there must have been much satisfaction in it. To be the instrument of relieving suffering men and women of pain, to see them creeping slowly back to the land of health again, to make a hearty, strong child out of a sickly baby—these were the things that were worth while. Our country doctor had his reward in more ways than one. He was an instrument in the hands of the Heavenly Father as much as was the minister who looked after the souls of the people. All his practice was the coöperation with those vital forces back of which was the Lord of life and of infinite love. Prayer had its place, and one country doctor bore witness that he never gave medicine without a prayer for guidance, and that it might be efficacious. Medicines, these good old family physicians believed, had their place in the Divine economy with food and drink and air, God having made them all to be used for the physical wellbeing of mankind. Hence the doctor had a right to think of himself as one of the Lord's servants.

Then, too, he had his reward in the out of doors life which he lived. The sunrises and sunsets were his; his the moonlit nights and the stormy, dark ones. His the

The Country Doctor

thunderstorms by which he was often overtaken along lonely roads. At such times he had those marvellous flashlight pictures such as the lightning alone can give, in which mountain, lake and stream were for a moment seen in all their beauty, to be followed in a heartbeat by black darkness. All the changes of the seasons, the melting of the Winter's snow and the coming of the first Spring flowers and song birds had been welcomed by him. The flaming hillsides, the golden tints of Autumn, the mellow days of Indian Summer had all passed before his eyes year by year as he went on his long drives to the bedside of the sick. The feathered folk along the highways, the squirrels following the rail fences, the little children whom he came to know so well, were all his friends, and he loved them all. The business man, methodical to a moment in his going and coming from store or factory, sees very little of the day as a whole, or the year as a whole. He is safely housed from storms, and rarely sees the sun rise on a Summer morning. Nature does not give to him her heart as she does to the man who is familiar with all her changing moods and seasons. The country doctor becomes acquainted with her through the days and the nights spent in her open courts, and she tells him all her secrets.

The history of one life is the history of many in our county. These unselfish, heroic men who went about doing good deserve to be remembered. And they are appreciated when they are gone, and kindly words are spoken concerning them. Would it not be well to remember them with words of appreciation and thankful-



“And she tells him all her secrets.”

The Country Doctor

ness while they are yet among the living whom they have helped? The words of Jamie Soutar, in "A Doctor of the Old School," by Ian Maclaren, come back to us forcefully: "'But wae's me'—and Jamie broke down utterly behind a fir tree, so tender a thing is a cynic's heart—that fouk 'ill tak a man's best wark a' his days withoot a word an' no do him honour till he dees. Oh, if they hed only githered like this juist aince when he was livin', an' lat him see he hedna laboured in vain! His reward hes come ower late, ower late.'"

These unselfish physicians who remain among us, who ride over these hills and up and down these valleys in all sorts of weather on their errands of mercy, are worthy of our loving praise, for they exemplify that ideal set forth so beautifully by the Great Physician when He said that He came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XIII

A Hill-town Meeting House

OUR county has many meeting houses which have been fountains of life for the larger towns and cities. These hill-town churches have furnished able men and women for the city churches, making possible the great things wrought by them. The country towns have given to the colleges some of their best students, as well as their famous athletes; to the learned professions their most distinguished men, and to the business world its most successful financiers. At the same time the West has been seeded by the best products of the hill towns—their young men and women. It is impossible to conceive how the great Middle West, and the real West, could have been saved for God and for country without the rich fruitage of the New England meeting house. These hill-town churches need to be looked after carefully by the sons and daughters who had their birth and nurture in them. Their foundations should be kept in repair, the paint often freshened, the old bell kept ringing on the Sabbath, and the Gospel ministry sustained.

A Hill-town Meeting House

This is one of the things that are worth while. No love for foreign missions, no pathetic appeals for Western frontier work, should lead to the neglect of this. Both home and foreign work can now be done in the hill towns, to which liberty-loving foreigners are coming from the ends of the earth.



“It was white, within and without, and stood on a hill like Jerusalem of old.”

Behold, then, a picture of a hill-town church, not exactly as it is, although it has not so greatly changed as some, but as it was within the memory of the writer.

It was white, within and without, and stood on a hill like Jerusalem of old. Thither the tribes went up much oftener than the ancient Jews to their hill temple. This

A Hill-town Meeting House

hill town is eight miles due south from Litchfield, and for more than one hundred years was known as Litchfield South Farms, being an integral part of that splendid town. It is hardly fifty years since it became a separate town by the name of Morris, one of its honored family names. In the sixties there was still an academy there, a long, low, rambling building, a sort of "annex" to the house in which Mr. Samuel Ensign, the schoolmaster, lived. Mr. Ensign was the son-in-law of Mr. Morris, the founder of the school, one of the first academies in the county. Not many boys attended the school, and those were for the most part from outside the town, and boarded in Mr. Ensign's family. This schoolmaster loved a good horse, and drove one which was the admiration of the small boys. In snowy weather he was wont to drive his wife to church, and we watched for the beautiful white horse as we did for the minister. Mr. Ensign, unlike the schoolmaster who presided over "The Gunnery" in Washington, did not care for games and sports, but was dignified and severe in his appearance, artistic in his tastes, and cultivated in his manners. The home atmosphere for the boys must have been delightful, for Mrs. Ensign was a charming woman, refined and educated.

The church itself, in the old days, had wood stoves on either side of the entrances, with long pipes running the length of the building, sometimes smoking, and always having a sooty appearance. Around these stoves men, women and children gathered during the intermission between services on Winter Sundays. Foot stoves were

A Hill-town Meeting House

still in use by the older ladies, these being filled with the live coals from the church stoves. In the Summer the men visited under the horse sheds in the rear of the church, and ate their seed cookies or gingerbread and discussed the crops, while the women and children went to the old Smedley house kitchen, where there was a well with an oaken bucket, which, as it went down, wound up a rope with a heavy stone attached, by means of a large wooden drum. The children drank from the big dipper and gazed with awe down into the dark well. In this room there were milk pails and pans and a cheese press. Outside the door were a bed of fennel—meeting seed—and some rose bushes. Close by was the country store and postoffice. The farmers who were not too severe went quietly and got their week's mail, secreting it in their pockets. The county paper—the old *Litchfield Enquirer*—was usually gotten at this time. Many, however, felt that the mail should not be taken from the office on Sundays, but that it should be kept closed. The war changed this somewhat, for news from the front was looked for, a letter from George or John, telling about the battle of Antietam, or the Wilderness, or Cold Harbor. News items were exchanged and family matters talked over, for this was very likely the only social occasion during a month or months. The morning sermon was discussed at the noon hour, digested, so to speak, in preparation for the second one, which was sure to come in the afternoon. My father's family stayed all day, unless it took all the morning to break out the roads, as it sometimes did in hard Winters.

A Hill-town Meeting House

We left home about half-past nine for the four miles' drive or walk, and usually did not reach home until half-past four or thereabouts. After that we had our second meal, and what so appetizing as an eight miles' journey to church, two sermons and Sunday School? During the Winter the Sunday School was suspended, and in place of it there was a prayer meeting, led by one of the deacons. This was held in the meeting house, for the conference room, as it was called, had not then been built. The boy remembers one such prayer meeting, led by a deacon whose only gift was a religious voice. The Scripture was Romans, the twelfth chapter, but those exhortations of the great apostle were so graven on the mind that they have stayed there ever since, although much has been lost. This hill-town church had in those days for its minister the Rev. David Parmele. He was ministerial in dress, in voice and in manners. Everything about him proclaimed "I am a minister of the everlasting Gospel." The black clothes, the high collar, the silk stock, the gold-bowed spectacles and the awful voice all told the same story. Mr. Parmele when he appeared in public invariably wore a silk hat, a better one on Sundays, and a second best on week days. He even wore a silk hat when he took care of his horse, presumably because he had no other. How do we know this? Because there came a day when, as usual, he walked sedately up the aisle of the meeting house and deposited his silk hat on the communion table, went into the pulpit and preached a solemn sermon, came down after the service and took up his hat to walk out. Of



Birthplace of John Pierpont, Litchfield South Farms.

A Hill-town Meeting House

a sudden something seemed to strike him, for, leaving his wife at the church door, he started with rapid gait toward the parsonage. Thus, by his very strange actions, attention was called to him and his barn hat, covered with cobwebs and hay seed. He had fed his horse at noon, and had gone to church forgetting to change his hat.

Parson Parmele, as the ungodly called him, was a good man, and served his generation well. The children, however, hid when they saw his horse and carriage coming over the hill. Although there were many boys and girls in the family, they seldom came forth until he had disappeared beyond the turn in the road. We welcomed the family doctor because of his kindly words and jolly, sympathetic face, but the minister—our minister he ought to have been—seemed to us to belong to quite another world. He reminded us of sickbeds, funerals and heaven. Ah, well! ministerial dignity became the men who preached the theology of John Calvin.

This hill-town church in Litchfield South Farms nurtured a fine set of young men and women, in spite of their being afraid of the minister. Some of the boys went to college and into the ministry, and most of those trained in the old church have brought honor to their native place. The fathers and mothers were dignified, intellectual, shrewd men and women of the old New England stock. Few, very few, foreigners, perhaps not more than a half dozen families, lived within the borders of the society. The tide of emigration West

A Hill-town Meeting House

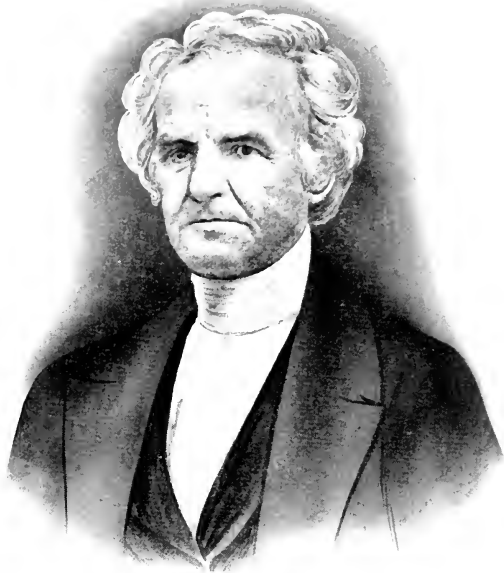
had not yet depopulated the hills and valleys, and immigration from all lands had not yet set back into the country towns.

The meeting house was well filled on Sundays at both services, the older boys sitting in the gallery on the one side and the girls on the other. It was considered an honor to graduate from the family pew to the gallery, for it marked a stage of development from being under authority immediate, to being trusted. If that trust was violated, the offender was brought back again and seated in the pew with the smaller children. The singers sat in the rear gallery, and were led by the melodeon when there was any one to play it, or by the singing master with his tuning fork. As I remember it, the singing was all done by the choir, there being no such thing as congregational singing. Indeed, as a boy, the idea never occurred to me that the congregation had anything to do with that part of the service. Most people stood, it is true, and followed the hymn with a book that had no music written in it, with occasional glances at the choir, and in many instances they turned about with great deliberation and faced the choir, the better to see and hear it.

The best thing that can be said of these hill-town churches in our county is that they are character builders. They have done for the souls of men what the schools have done for their minds. Moral integrity, purity, strength of will, hardness of moral fibre, all have been the result of just this kind of Congregational church life, where those constituting the church and

A Hill-town Meeting House

congregation have managed its affairs and been held responsible for its failures. The Congregational hill-town churches have been the fruitful mothers of men. Out of them have gone Beecher, Finney and Bushnell, Senator Platt, of Connecticut, General John Sedgwick and a host of others, who have upheld the honor and made famous the towns and State that gave them birth. The greatest honor that can come to any town is to say of it, at the mention of some name that has become famous, "This man was born there." John Pierpont, scholar, lawyer, poet, priest and warrior, was born not very far from this South Farms meeting house, in 1785. He was graduated from Yale College in 1804, a class-mate of John C. Calhoun. Yale conferred on him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1821, and Harvard the same degree in the following year. He was the grandfather of J. Pierpont Morgan, the eminent financier. In 1840 he issued his book of poems entitled "Wares of a Verse-wright Made to Order." Previous to this he had published his "Airs of Palestine." In 1861, at the age of seventy-six, Mr. Pierpont became an army chaplain, serving for one year. From 1862 to 1864 he held a clerkship at Washington, and rendered his department of government valuable service in the compilation of statistics. Whatever was his work, he magnified it and honored the position. He was a fine product of the hill town and its meeting house. Sturdy, brainy, conscientious, patriotic, with a frame of iron and a will to match, he did his part of the world's work, and did it well. Along with these qualities were



JOHN PIERPONT

“Scholar, lawyer, poet, priest and warrior.”

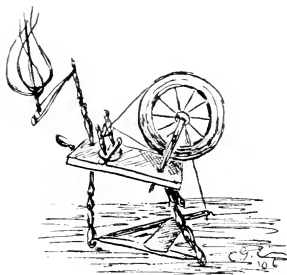
A Hill-town Meeting House

those more tender and gentle, with that lofty imagination and pure idealism which made him a poet. This is witnessed by many of his poems, manifestly by that one entitled "Hymn of the Last Supper":

"The winds are hushed, the peaceful moon
Looks down on Zion's hill;
The city sleeps, 'tis night's calm noon,
And all the streets are still."

The Rev. John Pierpont, of Litchfield South Farms, bore witness by his noble life and manifold activities to the Pilgrim spirit set forth in his poem, published in 1824, entitled "The Pilgrim Fathers":

"The Pilgrim spirit has not fled:
It walks in noon's broad light,
And it watches the bed of the glorious dead,
With the holy stars of night.
It watches the bed of the brave who have bled,
And shall guard this icebound shore,
Till the waves of the bay, where the Mayflower lay,
Shall foam and freeze no more."



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XIV

The Delectable Mountains

IT must always remain true that he who climbs to the mountain tops sees new beauties in earth and sky. Like Moses of old from the top of Pisgah's Mount, he will behold the promised land lying below him in all its far-stretching beauty. Thus we get a little farther away from the earth and a little nearer to heaven. Sea and sky, lakes and rivers are transfigured before him who with laborious steps has climbed the Delectable Mountains. Far above the din and strife of men, we are given holy vision of the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness is finally to dwell. Mountain peaks are loved by prophets, poets and seers. We shall go mountain climbing, then, without leaving our own county. Perchance we may find as much quiet beauty as we have found in foreign lands, and at less expense.

We will begin at the southern end, where the elevations, though less, have a restful charm and beauty all their own. Lover's Leap, on the Housatonic below New Milford, opens up before one the quiet stretches

The Delectable Mountains

of this largest of rivers within our borders. It resembles more a lake widening out from the dark gorge through which it forced its way in the glacial age. Wooded Goodyear Island lies in the foreground, while the river is lost among the hills of the south, over which the Autumn mists are hanging. The approach from the



“The river is lost among the hills.”

bluff has been so gradual that you do not imagine what you are coming to until, parting the bushes, it flashes out before you. That lovesick Indian maiden whose name and story are associated with the place ought to have been so enamored with the scenery as to have forgotten her dusky lover, who without doubt was un-

The Delectable Mountains

worthy of such suicidal devotion. The saner thing would have been to have spent a pleasant afternoon here by herself, and at evening time gone back to her father's wigwam, and, as a chief's daughter, fastened her affections upon another suitor, and very likely a more worthy one. One characteristic of love is, however, that it does not always do the sane thing.

Across the river, and farther up the valley, is Candlewood Mountain, probably so named because of the pine knots which it used to produce. From its summit you shall see the Housatonic, flowing down through fruitful intervalles, with the fair village of New Milford on its farther banks. The wide main street of the village runs parallel with the river, with a grassy park through the centre, overhung with shade trees. Wealth, learning and religion have their abiding places here, and have helped to make this New England village the resting place of the weary and the working place of the industrious. Aspetuck Hill guards the north, and Chestnut Land rises in rounded green hills to the east, covered with fruitful farms, with their ample farm houses and capacious barns. This ridge divides New Milford from Washington, and from its highest point—the Cobble—the towns already named may be seen, together with Roxbury and a part of Kent, while on a clear day the long line of the blue Catskills stands out in bold relief against the sky, together with the spires of Litchfield, the county seat. In Washington, a view worth going after may be had at what is known as Steep Rock. The lands about this rugged cliff are owned by one of



"Wealth, learning and religion have their abiding places here."

The Delectable Mountains

the town's Summer visitors, and are preserved for a sort of public park, under private management. Six miles of roadway have been built, winding over rustic bridges, in and out among the trees, to the very summit of the rock. The Shepaug River here and farther up toward Litchfield is wild and wayward, making crooked courses through the valley over huge boulders and around bluffs crowned with hemlocks and birches.

Another viewpoint in Washington ought not to be overlooked. It is in that part of the town known as New Preston, and is called the Pinnacle. A steep climb will bring you to a rocky eminence, from which you have the surrounding country mapped out before you. Lake Waramaug, to the west and under the very shadow of the mountain, is as beautiful a lake as one can find, even though he cross oceans and continents in his search. The words of Sir Walter Scott, written of Loch Katrine, flash to one's mind and lips:

"And thus an airy point he won,
Where gleaming in the setting sun,
One burning sheet of living gold
Loch Katrine lay beneath him rolled;
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek and bay,
And mountains that like giants stand,
To sentinel enchanted land."

These mountains around Waramaug could hardly be called giants, and indeed Scott drew on his imagination somewhat when he called those about Loch Katrine by

The Delectable Mountains

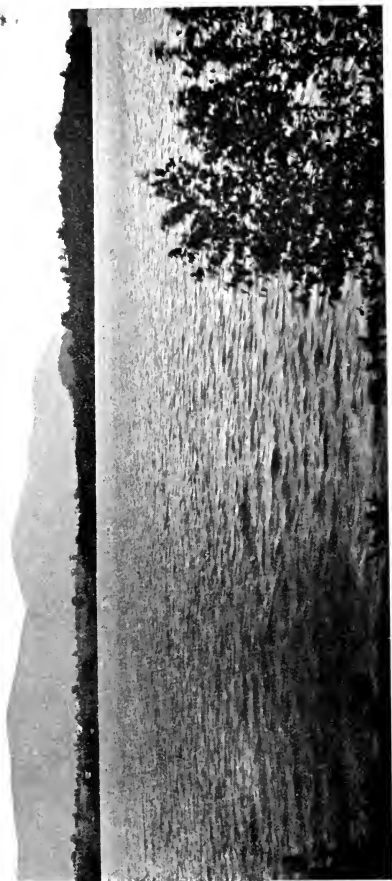
that name: still, they are larger than those which you look upon here. There is Mount Tom to the north and eastward, with its rounded top, reminding one of Mount Tabor, in Palestine, although it has such a prosaic name. Centrally located in the county, it overlooks a fair part of it. Nestled at its side as if for protection is its namesake lake, while Bantam, the largest sheet of inland water in the State, stretches away to the eastward. If Waramaug suggests one of the Scotch lakes, then Bantam may be likened to the Lake of Zug, in Switzerland, surrounded as it is by wide acres of fertile farm lands and apple orchards. Mount Tom was the Delectable Mountain of our boyhood days, for it was not far from the old red school house. An afternoon was given up occasionally to climbing its steep sides, golden milestones in the pathway of youth. From its top the world seemed transfigured. You travelled in a moment's time down the winding length of the river at its base, and back again to the silver lake which marked its head waters. From white church spire to white church spire you went more rapidly than any twentieth century flying machine could carry you. You became then and there a traveller, an explorer, a lover of the beautiful. Geography and history and all learning meant more to you. An hour here was worth a hundred in yonder schoolroom. The soul expanded with its first real sight of the world.

Turning your steps to the northward, you came to Ivy Mountain Tower, in the town of Goshen, where you are afforded a wide, sweeping view in all direc-

The Delectable Mountains

tions. The Catskills are on the western horizon, and Talcott Mountain, in Hartford County, is on the eastern. From this point almost all the high elevations in the county may be seen. All these are the last of the Green Mountain range, which have wandered down into Connecticut through Massachusetts, where they are called the Berkshire Hills. The towns of Winchester and Norfolk have a number of these breezy viewpoints which are well worth climbing. Platt Hill, a mile east of Winchester Center, and four miles from Winsted, commands a view of a dozen or more church spires on a pleasant day, together with Highland and Crystal Lakes.

The highest point in the State is Bear Mountain, in the town of Salisbury. The top of this, which may be seen by all the dwellers in the region round about, is crowned by a pyramid of stone, surmounted by a bronze ball, erected by the late Robbins Battell, of Norfolk. On this monument is a tablet indicating that the top of Bear Mountain is 2,354 feet above the sea level. Salisbury is decidedly the lake town of Litchfield County, as it is dotted all over with most delightful sheets of water. Following out the comparisons which have been used in this article, this view from Bear Mountain would remind one of that which is obtained of Windemere and Grassmere from an elevation just back of the home of the poet Wadsworth. Our Connecticut view, however, is larger and more open, the hills and valleys have a wider sweep, while no lake is as large as Windemere. Looking down upon these lakes, they sparkle and



“Opal gems in their emerald settings.”

The Delectable Mountains

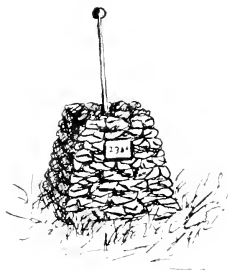
dimple in the sunlight, as the soft breezes sweep over them. Opal gems in their emerald settings, they ever change with the changing sky and clouds. Beneath and about you are such lakes as the twins Washining and Washinee, Wononoscopomuc, with Lakeville and the Hotchkiss School upon its shores, the Mount Riga lakes lost in the forests of the north, with here and there little lakes which seemingly have escaped from their mothers, although they may be tied to them by those winding brooks, veritable apron strings. Eastward opens up the broad valley of the upper Housatonic, with Norfolk on the distant hilltops. Along the line of railway and river are the villages of Canaan, Falls Village, Ashley Falls and Sheffield, while farther north and seen only with the eye of faith, even from this high point, are Great Barrington, Lee and Lenox, together with old Stockbridge. This is the valley of content and restfulness, bearing by good rights that ancient name for the promised land.

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.”

It would be hard to find a view anywhere excelling this one from the top of Bear Mountain. Hither the original inhabitants of this region must often have come in the old days to sweep the horizon for signs of their enemies. Here they built their signal fires, rude tele-

The Delectable Mountains

graphic signals as wireless as any of to-day. And here on this Delectable Mountain shall come lovers of the beautiful in the days that shall be. Our best wish for them is, that here, in elevation of soul, they may "behold the King in His beauty, and the land which is far off."



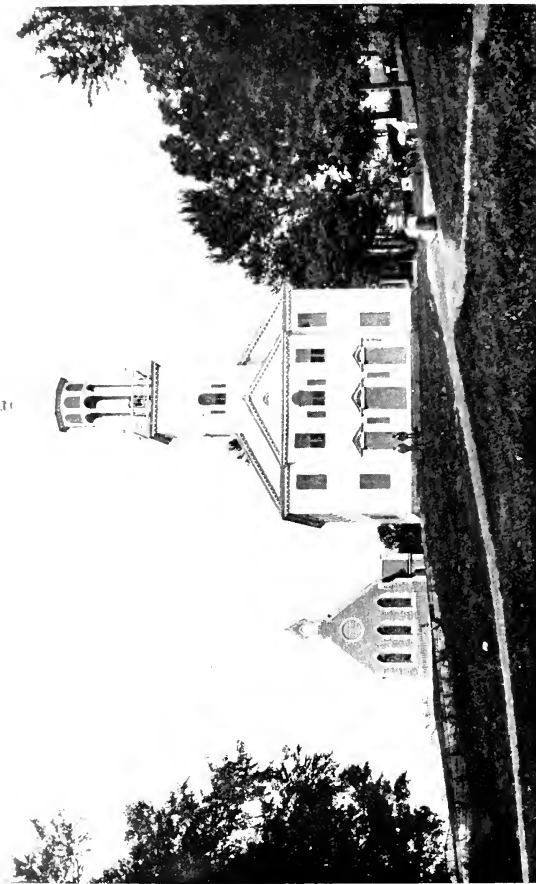
LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XV

Huckleberrying

IT all depends upon how you spell it. If as above, you are to the manner born, and know the luxury of huckleberry pie, or a bowl of bread and milk, black with fresh picked berries. If you spell it "whortleberry," you are from the city, and from any county in the State save Litchfield. Your knowledge of the berry is derived very largely from the dictionary. I shall hear you call blueberries huckleberries, and declare when you have tasted them that you like one just as well as the other. That is the shibboleth that shall betray your place of birth.

They grew, those luscious berries, by the roadside on the way to school, and we lunched on them in the morning and picked and took them home for our supper at night. They grew by the side of the pond where we fished, and refreshed us at intervals when the perch and bullheads would not bite. The boy was sure of a bite, anyway. During the month of August, when they did most abound, we fairly lived upon huckleberries. Memory recalls the theological student who returned from the Green Mountains, where he had preached during his first vacation, living in the mean time upon salt fish,



“While the old church keeps guard over its three graveyards.”

Huckleberrying

hard boiled eggs and soda biscuit, very, very rich in soda. This thin, lank, half-famished young preacher, taking bitters for his indigestion, came down to the old farm in Harwinton—that good old huckleberry town—where his sister turned him out to grass and huckleberries. Tradition hath it that he gained eight pounds in twice as many days, and went back to New Haven fully able to digest Harris's "Systematic Theology" and Hoppin's "Homiletics."

Harwinton has as fine huckleberry fields as any town in the county. It has also a large Congregational church, which dominates all the landscape, as it did the thinking of the sturdy farmers who thronged to its worship on Sundays. Its capacious galleries were full of the boys and girls, while the rear gallery held the men singers and the women singers, who sang a lifetime to the worshippers below. They did not mince matters, but sang with the spirit and the understanding, while the congregation faced about, turning its back upon the minister, the better to enjoy the fine work done by its musical men and women. In those days there was nothing that could be called congregational singing.

You may still pick huckleberries on the hills and catch trout in the brooks, while the old church keeps guard over its three graveyards, looking across and up and down the valley, but alas! when the bell rings only a handful of worshippers assemble, and the choir is but a ghost of its former self. "Mary Abijah's" wonderful voice is heard no more, and the congregation now gives heed to the minister even during the singing. The

Huckleberrying

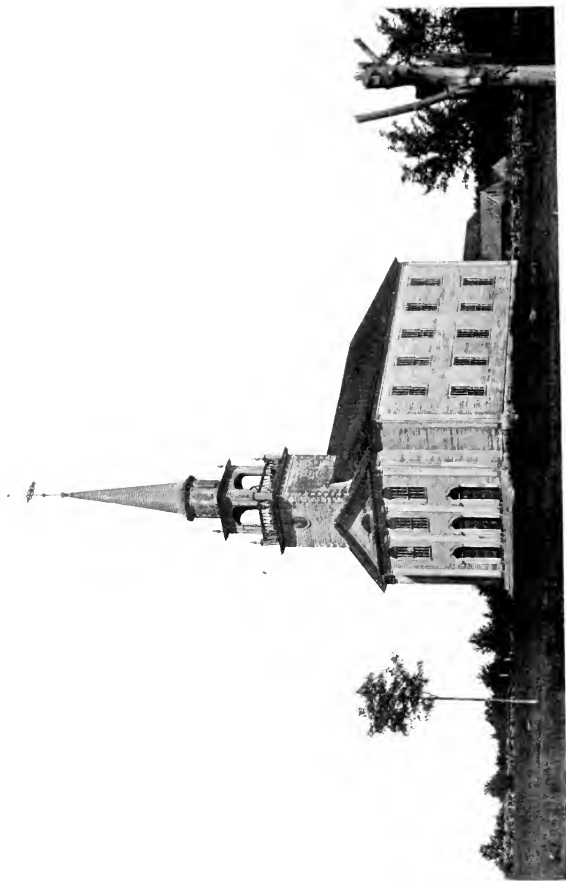
Huntington chapel—a gem in granite—in memory of the mother of a millionaire, is likely in time to be the church edifice, although the congregation of a half century ago could not have gotten within its doors. Some of the fathers sleep in the hillside graveyards, but some joined their children in city homes, and these old places that once knew them so well know them no more. Strangers have become their ploughmen. But the prophecy has had an unheard of fulfilment, for strangers and aliens own many of the old farms, and a half dozen languages are spoken in the presence of the ancient huckleberry bushes.

The city lady once on a time came to Harwinton to regain health and vigor through breathing pure air, drinking real milk and eating fresh country fruit and vegetables. She had heard of the delights of huckleberrying and must needs go herself. She was driven over a rough, stony wood-path to the old pasture lot, disturbing her fitness of things and likewise her liver. Her country hostess fell to the task of picking the delicious berries, bending lovingly above the bushes or kneeling adoringly before them, or camping down in front of them on cool grass and not so cool stones. The sun beat upon her, but she heeded it not; the bushes scratched her hands, she expected it; the snakes wriggled away, she let them wriggle. She came for berries, and berries she would have. But what of the city lady? Getting around among the bushes was “just horrid.” She would surely tear her skirts. Then, too, the sun was so hot, and it tired her to bend over. She was

Huckleberrying

sure there were dreadful snakes in the bushes. Behold her, then, sitting on a pile of carriage cushions under the shade of an umbrella, picking daintily from the bushes which her faithful attendant had broken off and brought to her! This despite the fact that both bushes and green berries were sacrificed. But she was getting what she came for—health. The soft air fanned her pale cheek, the brook sang its best Summer day song, in low pitched key, the cicadae rasped out their shrill advertisement that the day was hot and they were happy, the fragrance of the new-mown hay came from an adjoining meadow, while the far-away hills were brooded over by the farther away blue sky.

The whole family at the old farm house sometimes go huckleberrying. Father is so nearly through haying that he will go and drive. Dinner shall be taken along, and a camp kettle and coffee pot. This time the pasture lot is on a hilltop, whence the kingdom of Litchfield County can be seen and the glory of it. Yonder is Town Hill, in New Hartford, with the white steeple of its ancient Congregational church, forsaken in these later years by its congregation, but well cared for by its lovers. Under its shadow Tracy Pitkin, Yale graduate, Chinese missionary and martyr, played and nourished his heroic soul. It matters not where his body rests, since his work was so nobly done, the story of which you may read on that marble monument beneath the dome of Memorial Hall, at New Haven. Before he died he dedicated his little son to the cause of Christ his Master in China.



"Forsaken in these later years by its congregation."

Huckleberrying

From this same hill so near the sky line, where we went to find huckleberries but are finding something better, you may look across the valley to the northwest and see the spire of the Tarringford church, which overshadowed the house in which Samuel J. Mills was born—he of the haystack, and Andover, and Africa. President Griffin of Williams said of him that at least five missionary societies were born in his mind and heart. The father of the American Board of Foreign Missions, the inspirer of his generation, with a noble desire to fulfil the command of the Lord, and the pioneer in African missions, he grew up in a humble parsonage, and left the rich legacy of his life for others to perfect with their faith and self-sacrifice. You are indeed near sacred ground in your huckleberry patch.

When the family goes berrying the most important function is the dinner. The fire is built between two stones, the coffee pot prepared and set boiling, and the contents of the kettle—boiled corn and potatoes—served with the cold meat. Beneath the shade of a storm-beaten, ice-broken old chestnut we eat, drink and are thankful, having for a dessert a dish of berries covered over with real cream—a dish fit for any son or daughter of these magnificent hills.



LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XVI

The Neglected Graveyard

THERE are scattered about among the hills of our county not a few neglected graveyards.

They are not so common, perhaps, as they were a quarter of a century ago. In some of them have lain for long years the bodies of Revolutionary soldiers, without monument or sign to indicate the honored dead who lie buried there. The marking of these graves has been the task of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and they have entered upon it with an enthusiastic appreciation of the debt which we owe to these old soldiers, whose names we would not forget. In searching after their burial places, these daughters have been astonished to find so many neglected graveyards, and have used their influence to have them better cared for.

Another cause which has led to the better care of these forsaken "God's Acres" has been the coming back into the county of the children and grandchildren of those who were buried there. The rebuilding and restoring of the old farm house have led to the looking after the resting places and the monuments of their ancestry. If it is worth our while carefully to trace

The Neglected Graveyard

out the long lines of our progenitors and build libraries and churches in their memory, surely it is just as commendable to see that the plot of ground where they are buried is suitably inclosed and properly and decently cared for. There is room for the development of veneration of our ancestors.

I well remember the lonely, unkempt cemetery where we laid our little brother to rest. It was on the bank of a pond much frequented by the frogs, noisily disturbing the otherwise still and fearsome night. An old wall inclosed it, with wooden stairs, gradually falling into decay, leading over it. A few of the graves were well cared for, but weeds, briars and brambles crowded their way among the mounds of earth. It was situated in a part of the town which was notorious for Sabbath-breaking and drinking. There was not a pleasant association about the spot, and children hurried by it with hearts in their mouths and bated breath. A few solemn spruce trees pointed their slender tops skyward, and at night the wind sang a funeral dirge through their swaying branches. This particular graveyard rapidly went from bad to worse, as families moved away or died out, leaving the dead to the tender mercies of the town and to strangers. There came a day when the old schoolmaster's soul was mightily moved by the sight, and he determined, either alone or with the help of others whom he might interest, to clear it up and make it more inviting to the living and more worthy of the dead. May coming generations keep his grave green and his monument erect! That

The Neglected Graveyard

reminds me of the common sign of neglect that one sees in these burial places. The headstones, set in the earth without any base, have been thrown by the frost until they lean in every way from the perpendicular. They remind you, as you look through the graveyard, of a forest through which the tornado has passed. Some stones lie prostrate on the ground, broken in pieces; others have been picked up and set against the wall or a tree, as one might pick up a drunken man and lean him against something, hoping that thus he might be helped to stand.

Passing through one of these neglected graveyards, one is struck with the names, which are no longer found among the living. When the grave was made, everybody in the town knew the mourned occupant. Now the town's people come and say, "Who was this man who lies buried here? We never heard of him; none of his name now live among us." This in itself accounts in part for the lack of care so often shown these sacred places.

On my father's farm there was a neglected graveyard. It was back a quarter of a mile from the house, on the edge of a dark wood. A substantial stone wall inclosed it. There were less than a half dozen graves in it, and those evidently of one family. The boy paused as he drove home the cows and read the inscriptions upon the marble slabs, now brown with age. No one knew anything about those buried there save what was written on the stones. They were born, so the stones said, in such a year, and died in such a year, but who cared



“Brambles made it hard to pass through.”

The Neglected Graveyard

whether they ever lived or not? Quite sizable trees, fed on the rich mould, and brambles made it hard to pass through this inclosure of the dead. It was not always thus. Loving hands laid this little child here to rest, while the scalding tears flowed. The mother felt that she must have the mound of earth near enough to keep it covered with fresh flowers. Often the father and mother came here at close of day, and spoke gently of the life which like a welcome light had gone out in their home. The father laid with his own hands the stones in the wall to better guard the newly-made grave. No weeds grew in the inclosure, but flowering plants were made to bloom here, and a well-trodden path led from the house to the grave of this little child. At night, with axe on his shoulder, the father came from the forest, leaned against the wall and gazed tearfully at the mound of earth which the first snow was covering. Those tears somehow served to cleanse his soul and make him a better man. The snows of a dozen Winters have melted, and the birds have come and gone a dozen seasons, when you behold another procession winding through the meadow and coming toward an open grave. The mother now rests by the side of the child which she loved so well. Henceforth the father is divided between the lonely house on the hill and the graveyard by the wood. His heart is in the latter rather than the former. The farm does not attract him as it once did. His step has lost its elasticity. He sits in the gloaming by the window and looks out toward the wood. Often he is seen to stand on the slope of the

The Neglected Graveyard

hill watching the white marble slabs. Then there comes a day when he, too, is carried along the path toward the wood and laid to rest. A son and daughter come from the city to attend the funeral, and stand and read the inscriptions on the tombstones of mother and little sister. They will have an appropriate monument for father as soon as the estate is settled. The old farm must of course be sold, as they have no use for it. But if they sell it, what will become of the graves of their dear ones? "We will come back once each year, at least, and care for them," they are saying. The farm passes into the hands of strangers, the great city calls them with its myriad voices, sons and daughters demand their attention, and the graves are neglected. It is an old story, as old as the first family. The living bury their dead, and too often forget them and the place where their dust was laid. The strenuous life of New England, the pressing problems which must be solved, the drift westward and farther westward, have made these neglected graveyards possible. Every town in its corporate capacity should religiously and faithfully care for these burial places of the dead within its boundaries. This is the least that can be done for those that established the town and made the life of to-day possible. It matters not whether these cemeteries are under the shadow of the old meeting house or on some abandoned highway. There should be no partiality shown for the location or for the social standing of the dead while yet alive. If this is ancestor worship, let us have more of it.

LITCHFIELD COUNTY SKETCHES

XVII

The Yankee Farmer

IT is not so very long ago that the larger part of our population in Litchfield County were farmers. The minister, the doctor and the judge each had his own farm, larger or smaller, which he cultivated either directly or by proxy. The cultivation of the soil was the principal means of livelihood, and hence all were interested in it. There was no subject talked of more at the corner store on week days, and under the horse sheds on Sundays, than the crop prospects, the improvement of the soil, the exchange of farms, and matters more or less directly connected with them. The manufacturing villages along our water courses are the growth of the last generation or two. The farmer in our county is still in the majority, but he is not now always a Yankee farmer. The ends of the earth have been drawn upon in the cultivation of the Litchfield County farms. It was not so fifty years ago. The foreign population then was small and confined very largely to hired laborers. To speak of the men of our county as farmers, at the close of the war or earlier, would have well described them. Let us draw the char-

The Yankee Farmer

acter sketch of those forebears of ours, that we may see what kind of men they were.

Families growing up in isolated localities, and outside of the great world currents, will naturally present much of originality. The Pilgrims—the original New Englanders—put themselves thus outside of those influences which were shaping character and life in the Old World, causing theirs to be cast in new and strange moulds. As a class our New England farmers were in appearance stern and austere. Their views of the Divine sovereignty, and their experience in wresting from the soil a livelihood, had helped to make them so. They were not demonstrative, and were not given to the display of their affections or emotions. If there was a law in Connecticut forbidding a man to kiss his wife on a Sunday, it did not so much matter, for he was not given to kissing her very much on any day of the week. He did not weep often, and when he did weep it was not in the sight of men. His moral nature predominated rather than his feelings. He was not emotional; his nerves did not lie near the surface. He was true to his family, his Church and his country, although he would not boast of it, taking it all as a matter of course. He was not a man of words so much as of thought and of deeds. Like the electric needle, pointing always to the pole in silence, so our Yankee farmer pointed toward righteousness and truth without the blare of trumpets. He was not a copy of any living man, but resembled John the Baptist more than the Christ. The country solitude had impressed itself upon him. He knew that he was the

The Yankee Farmer

forerunner of those who should come after, and the laying of the foundations of a millennial Church and State was serious business. He had a strong physique, and could endure almost any amount of hard work and nervous strain. This in itself was of great worth to him and has been of value to his children. He was brainy, not bookish, and thought out his work and worked out his thought. He made his thin soiled farm pay him because he fertilized it with brains and pulverized it with muscle, and that kind of farming would make a Litchfield County farm pay to-day. He did not own or read many books—a small shelf would hold them all—but he knew one Book from cover to cover. He had not much time for reading, but much time for thought. He was not æsthetic, but loved and appreciated the beautiful, and his soul was often stirred by it. One of his number looked over the artist's shoulder as he was finishing a beautiful landscape and said, "Yes, sirree, I like 'em, and thar ain't nobody that appreciates them better 'an I do, an' I do believe if I hed a hundred thousand dollars I'd be pesky fool enough to buy some of them things."

The Yankee farmer was a natural theologian. He thrived on Calvinism and "Edwards on the Will." His sermons must be dogmatic, dealing with those profound questions of the Divine sovereignty and human freedom. On the other hand, his religion was often as heartfelt and simple as a child's. He was opposed to all priestcraft and ecclesiasticism, and suffered no man to lord it over God's heritage. The minister must be



“The Yankee farmer was practical, persevering, courageous.”

The Yankee Farmer

one of the members of the local church, chosen and ordained by it, and hence he was one among equals. He could not abide a dark church edifice, but loved the old white meeting house. Stained glass, ministerial millinery and all rituals were an abhorrence to him. He would not observe Christmas even, lest it should savor of popery. He would call no man master in Church or State, and had no respect for kings or bishops save as men. He is usually classed as conservative, but it would be nearer the truth to call him a radical in both politics and religion. That, indeed, was proven by his cutting away both from Church and State in the Old World and here founding the new order of things. He clung to the old so far as he thought it good, but was ever reaching out after the new and the better. New England has led the world in radicalism for two hundred years, and most things that are new start east of the Hudson River. The Yankee farmer was practical, persevering, courageous. As Martyn said of the Pilgrims, so it might be said of him: "Doubt and hesitancy were dropped from his vocabulary. 'I dare not' never waited on 'I would.'" Stern necessity inculcated courage and made him inventive and progressive.

Our farmer of the old days had not much ready money, for the farm produce was in the main exchanged at the country store for such things as he could not produce. His farm might be worth a few thousand dollars, but the family was usually large, and strict economy and thrift were demanded. He saved so closely that he was often called stingy and mean. This was carried at times

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to the verge of dishonesty, if not clear over. The best apples may have had a tendency to get to the top of the barrel, but when did they ever have any other tendency? He may not always have given "good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over," but his pound was a fair pound and his bushel a fair bushel, ordinarily. This much can be said: when he was generous it was not with other people's money. He sat in the gallery at times to save pew rent, and laid himself open to the charge of stealing his preaching. However, he is readily excused, since preaching is not a bad thing to steal.

The Yankee farmer was characterized as a shrewd guesser. Ask him a question, and the only answer might be, "Wal, I guess so," or "I guess not." This word "well" served as many purposes as the German word "so." He was sharp eyed, quick to see through things, and "take a sense" of them, as we say. His wit was more like that of the Scotch than like that of any other people. Accosted one day by some smart young fellows, who thought to make game of him by asking him if he believed that Balaam's ass really spoke as the Bible indicated that it did, his reply was, "Wal, I do' know as it is any harder to believe that the ass spoke like a man than it is that men speak like asses." A visiting Englishman was greatly impressed by the severity of a thunderstorm, and accosting an old resident said, "Isn't this pretty severe thunder and lightning?" "Yes," answered the farmer, "considerin' the number of the inhabitants."

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Conscientiousness was his prominent characteristic. He lived in a realm where God and conscience reigned supreme. He would do what he thought was right, though the heavens fell. An appreciation of the Divine righteousness and the desire to walk according to the Word of God were his in large measure. Two things he prized and worked for unwearingly—his church and his school. He planted them side by side, and wrought ever for their highest usefulness. These two institutions have made our country what it is, showing that those rugged men and women were far seeing and prophetic. They were wont to take a long look ahead, and built for the generations yet unborn. They felt the responsibility that rested upon them, and did not live in ease and pleasure, but sacrificed for the highest good of their generation and the untold generations that should come after them. They were benevolent, and opened their hearts and their pocketbooks for the establishing and maintaining of missionary work at home and abroad. Their benevolence was not measured by what they had, but they denied self in order that they might have something to give. It was no uncommon thing for a family to go without certain articles of food for the purpose of laying aside the value of them for missions. Butter they would deny themselves for weeks at a time, so as to give more for the doing of the Lord's work at home or abroad.

The Yankee farmer was a lover of liberty as well as a lover of God. Carrying his musket to church did not seem incongruous to him. Holding the town meeting

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in the vestibule of the church, or in the church itself, was to him a proper use of the House of God. Both his religion and his government were worth fighting for, or dying for if need be. He left the plough in the furrow and obeyed his country's voice, and the dust of Yankee farmers fills soldiers' graves oftentimes unknown and unmarked. Some who read these lines will recall those men and boys, from the farms of Litchfield County for the most part, who marched forth so bravely as the Nineteenth Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers. Their history was written in their blood on the hard-fought battlefields of the Southland. A remnant only returned, and even those had given their best strength and vitality to their country.

They are gone for the most part, those old-fashioned men and women who used to live on the hilltops and in the valleys, and a new generation has taken their places, and the world will never see their like again. Their simple manners, kindly ways and gentle, homely lives are of the past. We may have greater men and more liberally educated women, but we shall have no better. The Pilgrim blood is thin and blue, and runs but feebly through the veins of those of to-day. It has even come to pass that men who owe all they have and all they are to a New England parentage are found sneering at the old faith and manners. That which the sons and daughters of these Yankee farmers have accomplished at any time or anywhere has been because of that heritage of body and brain, heart and soul which has come to them from their ancestry.



“ Rivers may for the present be beautiful and strong.”

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The most successful business men, the brightest lawyers, the most skilful physicians, the most learned statesmen and the best and truest ministers of the Gospel have come of this old stock. The cities and the great West have been replenished and made fruitful from the rocky farms of Litchfield County. What is to become of the nation if this supply shall cease altogether? Rivers may for the present be beautiful and strong, but what would they be without the fountains high up among the hills? The splendid rivers of thought, of invention, of commercial and business life, of benevolence, charities and education would be comparatively small and worthless without these fountains among the granite hills of New England. It certainly is becoming for those who love their country and their fellow men to pray that the kindly dews of heaven may so fall upon these beloved hills of ours that these fountains of usefulness and power may not wholly cease, and that the promise may be fulfilled, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

Whittier, who perhaps understood the New England people and character better than any other of our poets, and who gave us his thought about them so beautifully in "Snowbound," may utter for us our closing word:

"Clasp, Angel of the backward look
And folded wings of ashen gray
And voice of echoes far away,
The brazen covers of thy book;
The weird palimpsest old and vast,
Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past;

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Where, closely mingling, pale and glow
The characters of joy and woe;
The monographs of outlived years,
Of smile-illumed or dim with tears,

Green hills of life that slope to death,
And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees,
Shade off to mournful cypresses

With the white amaranths underneath.
Even while I look I can but heed

The restless sands' incessant fall,
Importunate hours that hours succeed,
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,

And duty keeping pace with all.
Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;
I hear again the voice that bids

The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears;
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe flowers to-day!"

